



# **KILLING FOR CULTURE**

**AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF DEATH FILM  
FROM MONDO TO SNUFF**

**DAVID KEREKES & DAVID SLATER**

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*An Illustrated History of Death Film  
From Mondo To Snuff*

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*Made in England*

"What we see as spectacle  
is in fact a ceremony"  
– *Louis Malle*





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## Acknowledgements

Catastrophe. Human failing. Stupidity. Despair. As you progress through this book, so increases the potency of its subject matter. To put this stuff together was at once fascinating, occasionally funny, always demanding. Protracted periods of research and viewing exact their pound of flesh; at the very least, a measure of the spirit. In some way, the following have helped make it that much easier to get it all together: John Aes-Nihil, Sue Aisthorpe, Trevor Blake, Jörg Buttgereit, Douglas Clark, David Hyman, Assunta Iantosca, Darren Jones, Lesley Kerekes, Robert Prichard, David E. Williams, James Williamson, Paul Woods, British Film Institute, Werkstattkino, Metro Pictures.

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## Introduction

Under the California sun, where sky meets sand on the horizon, there lies buried the origins of a despicable concept. Its exact location is marked only by ancient footfalls, long since erased from the earth by desert winds. But it's there all right. Everyone knows that.

On 9 August 1969, Sharon Tate is murdered in her home. Eight-and-a-half-months pregnant, the actress wife of film director Roman Polanski is stabbed 16 times and left to die. Several of her friends are also killed, so too a teenage boy. The next night, 10 miles away, two more people are murdered – victims of another knife attack. Unmotivated crimes by unknown assailants; strange ritualistic killings (of famous people) – Los Angeles is gripped with fear and the world media tunes in. When Charles Manson and members of his band of hippy followers – known as “the family” – are charged with the murders (going to trial in June 1970), the enigmatic Manson becomes ‘the most dangerous man alive’; the devil. Several books appear, pertaining to detail the true story of the ‘crime of the century’. One of these, *The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy*

## 4 | Killing for Culture

*Attack Battalion*, is an anecdotal tracing of events as collated by Ed Sanders, member of the Rock band The Fugs. Sanders' prose is excitable and of a Beat nature – odd for a work of non-fiction. When the events in and around the Family appear to be getting strange, his tone is almost apologetic; when sinister or threatening, he concludes the passage with “OO-EE-OO.” The most flagrant repudiation comes when Sanders relates that the Family may have been involved in making “brutality” films, or – as he later has it – “snuff” films.

Snuff films depict the killing of a human being; a human sacrifice for the medium of film. Ed Sanders introduced the term to the masses when he claimed that such films lay buried someplace in the desert. Or had been stolen. Or maybe sold.

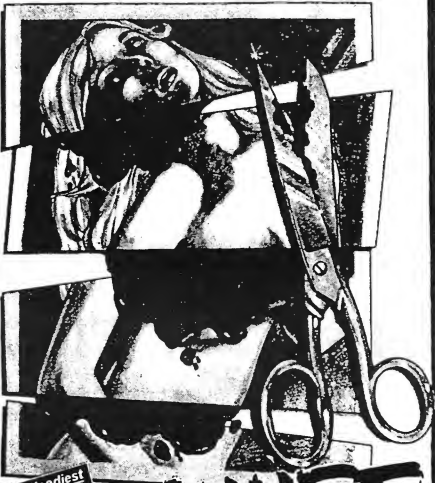
*Killing for Culture* is about the marketing of outrage. About ‘actual’ death on film, and how death interacts with the media. It is also about the enigma of snuff films, in which the taking of a life for the camera would seem a greater atrocity than the act of murder itself.

Film doesn't simply document, it *creates*. Whatever is put before the camera imbues the celluloid with life, grants those frames their existence. When somebody is seen to lose their life on film, their death becomes a product subject to change. In the first part of this book, we shall see how movie makers helped make a product out of Sanders' insinuations. In the second part, how death was sold to the public as ‘documentary’. And in the third, real death on film and the reality of snuff.

NB: When referring to foreign films, and films with more than one title, where possible the UK release title and English language title have been used.

**FEATURE FILM**

The picture they said could **NEVER** be shown..



The Bloodiest  
thing that ever  
happened  
in front of  
a camera!!

# SNUFF

The film that could only be made in South America...  
where Life is **CHEAP!**

*the actress is alive and well*

---

## 1. Slaughter

*"You will feel the pain and you will not flinch from it," the young man with the piercing eyes pines out of sync, his voice rumbling down the soundtrack through a reverb unit. "No," the girl before him retorts, her legs pinned to the ground at the ankles, a knife blade twisting furiously at the flesh between her toes. Blood, an unlikely shade of raspberry, colours the scene. The girl squirms vacantly.*

Rare is the motion picture that welcomes an X-rating. Generally, an X-rating would mean 'pornography', that the audience for such a rating would be limited to those over 17 – half the potential audience – and that many newspapers would not carry advertisements for the picture. In January of 1976, the *San Diego Union and Evening Tribune* dropped its six-year ban against ads for X-rated movies. Some five weeks later a movie appeared in New York City flaunting a self-imposed "X For Violence."

Early in February of 1976, following rumours on the possible



existence of 'snuff' films, and reports circulating that one such film had been smuggled into the United States from South America, a one-sheet poster was displayed in the Times Square area of New York, outside the National Theatre, 1500 Broadway, 45th Street. The poster was for a motion picture titled *Snuff. X For Violence*. The artwork was that of a bloodied, cut-up photograph of a naked woman and it bore the legend, "The film that could only be made in South America . . . where Life is *CHEAP!*" It also promised "The *Bloodiest* thing that *ever* happened in front of a camera!"

The general public, still warm with the media insinuations that there existed a perverse new form of celluloid snuff entertainment, flocked to catch "The picture they said could NEVER be shown . . . " More so when pickets began to line 45th Street.

*Snuff* had already made brief stops at theatres in Philadelphia and Indianapolis, where local authorities forced its departure. Now, with each performance of the movie in New York City, men and women would attempt to dissuade would-be patrons from entering the National Theatre by chanting "Murder Is Not Amusing" and waving hand-lettered banners.

Before the week was out, police reported serving two summonses for disorderly conduct after an egg was thrown at the chanting demonstrators. The fracas pushed *Snuff* into the pages of the *New York Times*: two column inches under the header '50 Picket Movie House To Protest Violent Film'.

Before the month was out the movie was to be a major cause for concern.

*Snuff* was a mystery. Its come-on was the implication that real people were dying on camera for no other reason than the edification of a viewing public. And the public that crossed the National Theatre pickets would have seen that it carried no credits. It had been dubbed into English, too, giving some credence to the South American origin. But then, the "Filmed in South America" tag-line supported a more obvious give-away for the audience sitting through *Snuff*: "Cheap."

*Snuff* is so cheap that for four years prior to its release it had sat gathering dust in a New York distributor's office. In the can since 1971, a fixture in the Monarch Releasing Corporation.

Monarch Releasing's business was pornography. Distributing low-budget skin-flicks. Selling the ropiest roll and tumble picture – “sexy little comedies R-rated” – to a public eager to believe whatever line was pitched to them. From his New York office desk, the man behind the Monarch Releasing Corporation, Allan Shackleton, would change the title of a picture in order that it may fit in with his latest sales pitch, or cut-up and edit certain dog-eared prints in order that he may squeeze from them a little extra mileage.

Allan Shackleton was first generation to the original exploitation pioneers – those men like Kroger Babb who, in the 1940s and 50s, managed to side-step the powers that be by hawking to a flesh-starved American public “Adults Only! Uncut! Uncensored!” sex ‘hygiene’ films – and had been in the business long enough to know never to pass up on a quick buck. So, when opportunity arose in 1971 for him to exploit a market outside that of his usual sex comedies, Shackleton snapped at the chance. Only, *Snuff* didn’t exactly make a quick buck.

Not that it was known as *Snuff* back then.

Michael and Roberta Findlay were a husband-and-wife filmmaking team working in the exploitation film business. One of their earliest movies was *Satan’s Bed*, starring a then unknown Yoko Ono. Typical of exploitation filmmaking, the Findlays would make their pictures to suit current cinematic trends. In the 1960s, for instance, they were responsible for sexploitation pictures like *Body of a Female* [1964], *The Touch of her Flesh* [1967] and its sequels *The Curse of her Flesh* [1968] and *The Kiss of her Flesh* [1968]; and, in the 1970s, horror pictures like *Shriek of the Mutilated* [1974] and *Slaughter*.

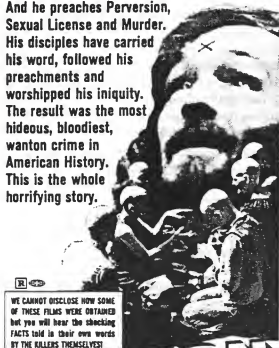
*Slaughter* was an attempt to cash-in on the Tate/LaBianca murders for which Charles Manson and his Family had recently come to trial. Not that the Findlay’s were alone in manipulating the sensational story. It seemed that every filmmaker and production company in the land had suddenly hit upon a unique ‘Manson’ angle from which to hang a plot. Director Ray Danton went to work on *The Deathmaster*, wherein a band of Californian hippies, mesmerized by his powers and evil doctrine, adopt a long-haired vampire named Khorda (Robert Quarry) as their guru. David Durston, with *I Drink your Blood*, has a group of blood-sacrificing hippies who become infected with rabies and attempt to wipe out a whole town. Lee Madden’s *The Night God Screamed* follows the persecution of a

## He calls himself JESUS CHRIST

And he preaches Perversion,  
Sexual License and Murder.

His disciples have carried  
his word, followed his  
preachments and  
worshipped his iniquity.

The result was the most  
hideous, bloodiest,  
wanton crime in  
American History.  
This is the whole  
horrifying story.



WE CANNOT DISCLOSE HOW SOME  
OF THESE FILMS WERE OBTAINED  
but you will hear the shocking  
FACTS told in their own words  
BY THE KILLERS THEMSELVES!

# MANSON

A LAURENCE MERRICK FILM

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE  
Best Feature-Length Documentary

An AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL Release - COLOR by Movielab



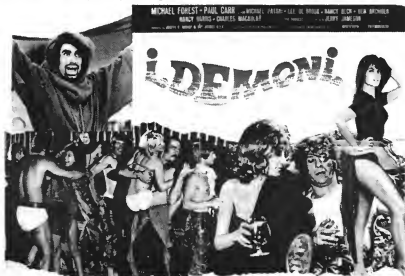
woman by a group of Jesus freaks after they have crucified her preacher husband. The 25 June 1970 edition of *Rolling Stone* refers to a porn movie by the name of *Love in the Commune* which features a "Manson-type balling a headless chicken." Wade Williams' *The Other Side of Madness* avoids direct references to Manson or the Family, but is generally seen as a fairly earnest – if not highly subjective – re-enactment of the days before the Tate/LaBianca slayings. And there were others.

Hippies, hippy leaders, hippy communes, drugs, and murder had also become the essential ingredients of every exploitation picture already in production. Al Adamson's biker pic, *Satan's Sadists*, had

been completed by the time the "Tate Slaying Trial Begins" hit the headlines but that didn't deter distributors from billing the movie as "The REAL story of California Sadistic Tate Murder Hippie Cult!" Likewise, Robert Thom's *Angel, Angel, Down We Go* became the rather more fruitful-sounding *Cult of the Damned*. Some innovative post-production doodling came with *I Demoni* (real title unknown) in Italy, whose poster art sported a still of the bearded guru from *The Manson Massacre*, as well as hippy orgies and a scantily clad Caroline Munro. Authors J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum in their book, *Midnight Movies*, liken Alexandro Jodorowsky's 1970 arthouse movie *El Topo* – "conceived and scripted before the world had ever heard of Manson" – as an obvious allegory.

But, in 1971, the Findlays with their *Slaughter* were among the first to explore and promote hippy cult hysteria. And it was Shackleton and his Monarch Releasing Corporation who recognized *Slaughter's* market potential.

When the Findlays made *Slaughter*, they did so in Argentina to avoid union costs. They also filmed it without sound because some of the actors and actresses in the movie were native Argentineans and spoke no English; their voices would need to be dubbed in later so why not dub the whole lot and avoid retakes because of fluffed lines? The picture was quickly completed and sent to the States for audio



dubbing.

Monarch knew they had a turkey on their hands. The plot made little sense, the ability of the players was nil, the gore quota was low, there was nothing of what could be termed 'action' and the dubbing was appalling. No ad line juxtaposition was going to save this movie, and Shackleton promptly shelved it.

In September of 1975, Family member Lynette Alice Fromme aimed a .45-calibre semi-automatic pistol and, at close range, attempted to assassinate President Ford. Filmmakers Lawrence Merrick and Robert Hendrickson's recently completed documentary, *Manson*, contained interviews with Family members including "Squeaky" Fromme. With Fromme coming to trial, the Federal district judge prohibited screening of *Manson* in 26 counties, stating that the availability of the film to the general public "could so increase the difficulty of selecting a fair and impartial jury that there is a high probability that defendant Lynette Alice Fromme could be denied her right to both a fair and speedy trial." The Supreme Court ruled that this decision was in direct violation of First Amendment free speech rights. The documentary made the national press and played in California for one week as *Manson & "Squeaky" Fromme: 'The most controversial film in American history'*.

With *Manson*/Fromme making the news and the screening of the much-anticipated *Helter Skelter* pending – a historically pertinent TV docu-drama of the Family murders, based on Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry's best-selling book of the same name – this resurgence of interest might have seemed the ideal time for Shackleton to off-load his *Slaughter*. But no. In 1975 came reports of a ferocious new documentary to emerge from Italy, *Ultime Grida Dalla Savana* (aka *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*), purporting to show the genuine on-screen mutilation and murder of Indians by white mercenaries. The same year, Arthur Davis released film of his expedition into the South American jungle, *Brutes and Savages*, the ads for which centred around the actual death of a man in the jaws of a crocodile.

The Findlays' print of *Slaughter*, as it stood, was never shown theatrically. If it had been, the viewing public would have seen this: The movie opens with two groovy chicks riding down a dusty backwoods road on a motorcycle, their long hair and love-beads flowing, an agreeable tom-tom and fuzz guitar pounding on the



The opening shot to *Snuff* (under one of its alternative titles).

soundtrack. When the two girls meet up with a third, smoking pot at an abandoned warehouse, one of them asks, "Jesus, I need something in this heat. Hasn't Anna got some good stuff?" The three conclude that Anna does indeed, and go off in search of the "greedy bitch." They find the girl suitably stoned.

With the sudden emergence of a young man named Satán, and upon his command, one of the cyclists locks Anna's ankles together. Satán (no doubt speaking from deep within his subconscious mind) intones, "You do not live for yourselves, but for me – in me and through me."

He tells the captive girl before him, "Anna . . . Anna, you have disobeyed me."

"Yes," Anna replies.

"You will feel the pain and you will not flinch from it," Satán pines, his voice out of sync and left to rumble down a reverb unit.

The girl shifts uneasily, attempting to ignore the knife blade cutting deep between her toes. The camera stares into the face of Satán. Then Anna. And back again, only closer.

The scene shifts to that of an airport in Buenos Aires. Max Marsh, film producer, flies in with Miss Terri London, and, in an impromptu press interview, tells a reporter, "Miss London is an

actress and she'll do anything to give a good performance." Miss London pouts and smiles for the photographer while, in the Men's Room, somebody is murdered; their throat cut by a woman waiting in drag. *Who? Why?*

Terri is constantly thwarting Max's amorous advances. When he leaves her alone for a moment, she calls up an old friend, Horst, and rekindles a love interest. Horst, a millionaire living with his father, doesn't care that he is already involved with another girl. He terminates his lasting relationship with Angelica by approaching her and casually asking, "What are you reading?" – to which she answers "Oh, words . . . words" – and then telling her the bad news.

The scene cuts to Satán, days, maybe months later. "You do not know yet the way we live," he says to Angelica. Meaning nothing in particular.

Terri London is in Buenos Aires to make a porno picture. She is constantly late on the set, if she shows up at all. Horst, now her lover, tries to convince her to get out of the business. She can't. "It's a start," she says, "and I want to make something of myself."

Despite her insistence that she despises him so, Terri has agreed to go to a carnival with Max that evening. Once there, however, her animosity toward the producer dissipates and Terri finds herself having a good time watching the stock footage of a carnival roll by.



Anna, the "greedy bitch." *Snuff.*

"This is better than Rio de Janeiro," she purrs. A masked man steps out of the 'crowd' and drags Terri up for a dance. She obliges, leaving a drunken Max sitting alone. The masked man turns out to be Horst who has secured a room someplace for sex. He tells Terri that his old girlfriend, Angelica, will keep Max happy.

Before Angelica arrives, Max's expression is displaced by a girl doing an erotic dance on his table. The girl looks down at him while she wiggles in a sequined dress. When Angelica does arrive and takes Max away, the dancing girl continues her dance, looking down at where Max once sat.

In a darkened alley, Angelica stabs Max through the heart. Elsewhere, Terri reaches a violent climax, screaming.

The following morning, Terri is interviewed by the police. For reasons unknown, the police investigation of the murder is conducted from a desk in the open air, right outside a barn.

"And after you changed places with this other girl – Angelica – you never saw Marsh again?" questions the detective.

"No," replies Terri, "not until –"

"The morgue . . . early this morning," he prompts.

"Yes."

The exchange of dialogue between Terri and the detective seems not a little stilted, ponderous almost, as if the two are communicating in opposing languages.

The police drop Miss London from their enquiries as Horst comes to collect her from the barn.

That evening, Horst takes Terri to meet his father – a lecherous old man who sells munitions to the Germans. "Surely you don't find that *SHOCKING?*" the old man snaps at an altogether nonchalant Terri.

Satán and Angelica turn up and proceed to deal a rhetoric about the killing of the rich in revenge for the sufferings of the poor.

"Get out of this house!" demands the old man.

In their warehouse hideaway, Satán initiates Angelica into his band of female followers. This he does by having sexual intercourse with the girl while the others look on. 'Through him and in him' the cult all seem to be feeling their master's pleasure, grinding to orgasm as he is. The sequence is bathed in blue.

In a provisions store, Satán's girls turn up to wreak mayhem.





At the provisions store. *Snuff* (under two of its alternative titles).

They rob the place at gun-point, all the while looking off-screen seemingly for direction. “What the hell is that? Sounds like a car?” exclaims one of the gang and runs outside to shoot an old lady. The daughter of the deceased – a young woman dressed in pony-tails, child’s blouse and pop socks – cries. They shoot her too. Back inside the store the gang shoot a couple of other folk.

Elsewhere, Satán is engaged in a philosophical discussion on Freedom with his new initiate. He tells her, “I demand more than anyone else could. How can you call that freedom?”

“It’s what I want,” Angelica replies, and has a flashback to how she was sexually abused by an ‘Uncle’ as a child, and how her father was murdered trying to defend her.

With his posse of girls before him, Satán determines that now “the time has come for *SLAUGHTER!*” and orders an attack on the Horst mansion.

Horst sits drinking champagne in the mansion grounds with a couple of friends of his. The drunken conversation turns to matters of sex, and friend Antonio suggest that Horst might like to make love to his wife while he watch. Horst agrees to having sex with the man’s wife but not for him to watch, and the couple go off to find a secluded



Horst about to be castrated. *Snuff.*

retreat. Meanwhile, Satán's girls – *sans* Satán – force their way into the grounds and proceed to murder Antonio, his wife, and Horst (but not before stringing him up and allowing Angelica to cut off his balls).

The assassins make their way into the mansion itself and up the stairs where they find a sleeping, heavily pregnant Terri London in bed with Horst's lecherous father. The old man, begging for his life, is shot dead. Terri, pinned to the bed, pleads of the demented Angelica, "*What good does it do to torment me like this?*"

"No good," Angelica snaps, knife poised. She demands of the pregnant woman, "*Is this his?*"

"Yes." The terrified Terri.

"Is this *his*?"

"Yes! Yes!"

Angelica plunges the knife toward the unborn child. Screams.

With this assault the movie comes to its abrupt end. The picture's cheesiness and stop-start suspension-of-disbelief suited Shackleton's prospective scenario perfectly. *Slaughter* was so badly put together it actually looked unfinished. In many ways it was. Roberta Findlay herself said of the picture, "it made no sense." In their rush to get

*Slaughter* 'in the can', the Findlay's had made no attempt to fabricate a killer-cult hippy drugs story of their own, and instead – outside of using actual names – pretty much retold the Manson Family 'Tate Slaying' exactly as it stood. The allegories are often and all-too obvious to mention.

Allan Shackleton decided that, as opposed to playing it down, for once maybe he could actually *utilize* a movie's convoluted, slovenly manner. That instead of plying any ad-line with a barrage of superlatives, what if he actually spelled out to the public that here was a shoddy piece of work? Of course, there would need to be a damn good reason as to why the public might want to see such a movie, touted as it was on its ineptitude. One such reason – the only reason by Shackleton's reckoning – was that it *was* unfinished, and unfinished because it could never be finished . . .

Motivated by the public interest in mondo atrocity, the likes of *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* and *Brutes and Savages* which 'marketed' real death, Shackleton decided to turn *Slaughter* about on its head. Instead of attempting to cash-in on Manson hysteria, he decided to exploit a specific, dark and treacherous component of that hysteria. Something much bigger than making *Slaughter* a reaction to an event.

Shackleton scrubbed all references to the Findlays' original movie.<sup>1</sup> He dropped the title and cut all credits. Then he engineered some additional footage and spliced it onto what was left. For the movie's new title, he dipped into *The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion*, and lifted from it author Ed Sanders' very own turn of phrase: "snuff."

Now, with *Snuff*, Shackleton was about to transform the commercially irredeemable *Slaughter* into a masterpiece of exploitation and scratch himself a place in the annals of motion-picture history. In embarking on an ad campaign that would send sales of tickets soaring, and a stunt comparable to that of Orson Welles' 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, Shackleton poised ready to electrify the imaginations of an ever-credulous public.

It was at the tail end of 1975 that the press began to report on the possible existence of "so-called 'snuff' films." One such film, it was claimed, had been intercepted by police after an attempt to smuggle it from South America and into the United States. It seemed almost

too convenient that Monarch Releasing should have been trading the ad-line, "Filmed in South America . . . Where Life is *CHEAP!*" at around the same time.

It was.

And the ever persistent talk of murder and cine-contraband by the press was *particularly* convenient when one considered it the extensive, free, pre-publicity for Monarch that it actually was.

There was never really any snuff film smuggled anywhere. There was never really any snuff film, full-stop. Such reports had been constructed in the form of tip-offs that an anonymous Allan

### 50 Picket Movie House To Protest Violent Film

About 50 people, some accompanied by children, picketed a movie house in the Times Square area yesterday to protest the showing of a film purporting to show scenes of sadism, atrocities and murder.

The police reported serving two summonses for disorderly conduct after an egg had been thrown at the chanting demonstrators who were seeking to dissuade would-be patrons from entering the National Theater, at 1500 Broadway, at 45th Street:

The film, entitled "Snuff," opened last week. Its promoters said it had been shot in South America, depicting actual incidents. Yesterday's protestors chanted "Don't go in" and carried hand-lettered signs with such messages as, "Murder Is Not Amusing."

Shackleton had himself 'leaked' to the media. But Shackleton didn't stop there.

We are opposed to the filming, distribution, and mass marketing of the film *Snuff* currently showing around the clock at the National Theatre in New York City. The term 'snuff' has been used in the underground film circle to label those pornographic films depicting actual, cold-blooded murder of women. Purportedly a film of this type was produced in Buenos Aires, Argentina and in this film a real woman was murdered. It is implied in advertisements of the film currently showing that this may be the same film . . .

So read a flyer distributed by feminists outside the National Theatre in New York City.

Women and other persons of conscience will demonstrate at Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's offices to protest his refusal to recognize the clear and present danger of a film in this borough which purports to be a photographic recording of a woman's actual torture and murder . . .

The "photographic recording of a woman's actual torture and murder" was in reference to the additional footage that Shackleton had had filmed, and which now closed *Slaughter*. Where the Findlays' original movie ended in the Horst bedroom upon Angelica's knifing of the pregnant Terri, *Snuff* now continued to run.

In a ploy to animate the viewer into believing they were privy to something rare and exclusive – that they were glimpsing a side to motion pictures usually hidden from their eyes – Shackleton had this new footage take the form of a 'behind-the-scenes' cutaway, supposedly revealing the actual manufacture of the film in progress complete with spotlights, soundman, cameraman, various technicians, all going about their work.

This new footage (filmed by one Carter Stevens, credits the *Monthly Film Bulletin* of November 1984) culminates in the 'murder' of one of the stage-hands.

With this little film-within-a-film scenario, Shackleton was able to make good his perverse ad-line ambiguities that here was "The *Bloodiest* thing that *ever* happened in front of a camera!!" and "The

picture they said could NEVER be shown . . . ”

Such was the essence of the movie's negative promotion. Now it could well be argued that if all that had gone before was a badly constructed, badly acted mess – and it was – then it was because *Snuff* had good reason to be. Shackleton's campaign implied that *Snuff* was a demented exposé in which the usual stuff – ‘the movie’ part – just happened to be there, unfinished, a *modus operandi* for the photographic recording of actual torture and murder.

Like *Slaughter*, Shackleton's *Snuff* opens to the two groovy chicks riding down the dusty highway on a motorcycle. Except now the word SNUFF appears on the screen, with the white letters changing to a blood red and dripping away with no hint of credits: no director, no producer, and – more ominous still – no players. *No one* was involved in, or responsible for, this motion picture.

From here on, things pretty much run as before, with the Findlays' original dialogue taking on a curiously fitting parallel pending Shackleton's tagged-on gore-sodden climax. For instance, that of Max Marsh's early statement, establishing Terri London's affiliation to the real-life Sharon Tate: “Miss Terri London is an actress and she'll do anything to give a good performance.”

After Satán's female followers have stormed the mansion, in the bedroom, when old man Horst has been shot dead and Angelica strikes the pregnant Terri with a knife, it is Terri's resultant scream that introduces Shackleton's ‘modification’.

As the scream adopts a technical inflection, off-screen a voice yells “CUT!”

The scene then cuts away to reveal a studio set – that of the Horst bedroom in long shot – with actors and actresses caught in the previous moment's carnage. Surrounding the players are the recognized accessories and trappings that accompany motion picture-making . . . including one archetypal obnoxious, bulldozing director. Of the last take, the director confides in a pretty production assistant: “That was dynamite. That was a gory scene and it really turned me on.”

She confesses, “It turned *me* on.”

What follows is a stupefying descent into madness for the T-shirted director, and for the tawdry movie of the last 70-odd minutes



Angelica stabs the pregnant Terri. *Snuff*.

a lamination of truly astronomical proportions.

Goads the director: "Why don't . . . why don't you and I go to the bed. . . over to the bed, and get turned on . . . turn each other on, mm?"

"What about all these people watching?" questions the girl.

"They're not gonna be . . . give 'em just a minute they're gonna be gone."

Still in long shot, still in whispers, the director coaxes the girl over to bed and engages her in a little light petting. Contrary to leaving, however, the others in the room slowly focus their attentions towards the couple, with the cameraman filming and the sound recordist taping.

Point-of-view shot: The couple groping and fondling on the bed; The girl's startled face as she suddenly becomes aware that the camera is on them.

"What are you doing? Are you filming this? They're filming it!"

The girl struggles to free herself from the director's pawing, but he holds fast. "Don't worry about it," he says.

"You're crazy!"

"Just move a little back up here—"

"*You're crazy!*" Scared.

"—right back up here."

*"Let me go!"*

"Shaddap!" Then, to the crew, "Do all of you wanna get a good scene?"

Cut away to the crew and affirmation.

"Okay . . . watch yourself . . . watch . . ."

*"Let me up!"*

" . . . watch . . ."

*"Let me go! You're crazy!"*

The director calls for assistance. A crew member dutifully, expressionlessly, holds the girl's flailing arms down to the bed. With his hands now free, the director reaches for 'Angelica's' knife from the last scene.

"You're crazy. You're not serious. You're not really gonna do it," the girl pleads.

"You don't think so?"

"N-no."

"Think I'll kill her . . ."

With knife in hand, the director slices through the girl's blouse and across her shoulder. Blood the colour of raspberry issues from the wound. She writhes and hollers in pain.

The director encourages, "Scream, go on, scream! That's it,



Shackleton's 'murder victim' from the tagged-on finale to *Snuff*.



scream!"

The screaming becomes a pathetic sob.

Exasperated, he bellows, "*STOP!! You want to play!?*"

More sobbing.

Ranting unintelligibly, the director takes from his back pocket a pair of pliers, grabs one of the girl's hands and shears from it a finger. A pool of blood soaks the bedsheet. The cameraman – who, so far, has somehow managed to shoot several successive and alternating POV angles with the one camera – now zooms in for a close-up, lingering on the wriggling hand-less-one-finger so that the audience might appreciate the fact that it isn't made entirely of rubber.

Cut to the girl apparently on the brink of slipping from consciousness . . . but doesn't. Overt maniacal grimaces from the director and the order, "One of you guys come around and help me, will you?"

"Please . . . no more, no more," the girl moans.

"Go get the rig saw."

"Please . . ."

Comes the electric saw and the whirring of the motor. The saw blade edges closer to the victim, and takes her hand off at the wrist.

With the hand severed, the director brings down his knife into the girl's stomach. (A splutter of blood. Coughing. Silence.) A moment of shamelessly sloppy effects work allows him to incise through a shapeless torso and toward the unconscious girl's genitalia. The thumping of a heartbeat swells onto the soundtrack. In a scene equal to that of De Sade at his most debauched, upon the blade reaching the crotch, the psychotic D. sinks his hand deep into the wound. A posthumous fist-fuck provides him with a handful of entrails. Moaning softly to himself, the director sinks his hand back for more. Deeper this time, deeper, pulling out the heart. Orgasmic shuddering on his part. He dips his hand in once again, clawing around.

Wild-eyed and yelling, the director throws the results of this last internal scouting into the air. Freeze frame.

The frame blurs into a washed-out umber, then runs into leader-tape. Then blackness. A voice punctuates the dark and whispers: "Shit, shit . . . we ran out of film."

Another voice, again whispering: "Did you get it – did you get

it all?"

"Yeah, we got it all."

"Let's get outa here."

The sound of breathing. Ends.

It didn't seem to matter, the absurdity of promoting a motion picture that purported the actual on-screen murder of one of its crew. Nor did it appear to matter that such a movie, after having been 'smuggled' into the country, should turn up slap bang in New York City and openly run ads on Times Square. It didn't seem to matter because lobby groups still protested against it. Television crews still arrived to film the protestations. And governmental officials continued to 'look into the matter'.

But as early as March, 1976, the more astute were beginning to recognise *Snuff* for the scam it actually was. Writing in the *New York Times*, film critic Richard Eder opened his review of the movie with, "There is a patch of anti-matter on Times Square into which not only public decency disappears, but reality as well." He went on, "Everything about the film is suspect: the contents, the promotion and possibly even some of the protest that is conducted each evening outside the box office . . ."

If the protests outside the National Theatre had been suspect – along with Shackleton's planting of 'high profile FBI men' in and around the area – it didn't deter the movie from continuing to pick up publicity and shift into gears far beyond those of even Shackleton's expectations. *Snuff* was a rampaging, self-perpetuating publicity monster.

When *Snuff* arrived in Monticello, New York, members of the feminist movements NOW (National Organisation for Women) and WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women) made complaints to the police against Rialto Theatre owner, Richard Dames, on the grounds that the film's promotion "advertises and advocates murder of women as sexually stimulating."

Subsequent screenings of the movie were suitably met with demonstrations. *The Times Herald Record* of 11 March 1976, for instance, reports that placards inscribed with "Snuff kills women – zap it" were being waved outside the Rialto, and that *Snuff* playing was a movie "depicting the dismemberment of women."

District Attorney Emanuel Gellman advised that he could take no

action against theatre owner Dames for screening the movie, because, he said, "There is no place we can go if violence is the only complaint." That said, Gellman went on to add that the only time he *could* act was if the complaint is based on pornography. NOW and WAVAW members returned the following night to lodge a further complaint . . . and Dames was duly charged with second-degree obscenity and ordered to appear in court.

The involvement of the feminist movement made for a radical upward swing in the movie's media profile – despite it being, once again, anonymous Shackleton tip-offs that brought it to unsympathetic attentions in the first place. *Snuff* became, in effect, the quintessence of the whole feminist cause, being touted as "the ultimate in woman-hating." Groups were lobbying *ad hoc* against *Snuff*: holding meetings, organising pickets, making phone calls to press and government officials. Anything that might raise a stink and lead toward driving *Snuff* away.

In their bid to quash the movie, the feminists had inadvertently taken aboard Allan Shackleton's *Snuff* publicity standard. For over a year they were to blow its trumpet across the United States . . .

The women's community of Denver, Colorado, for instance, organised a mass telephone campaign to a local theatre which was due to show *Snuff*, constantly harassing the owner. Leaflets were distributed and a plea was made to Denver District Attorney, Dale Tooley, who banned the movie before it played.

In San Diego, feminists incited community and church groups into picketing a local movie house screening *Snuff*. The following night, a half-hour before it was due to play, approximately 40 women formed a circle in front of the theatre and chanted "Stop *Snuff* now! Several TV crews arrived at the scene and the incident made primetime news. The theatre manager told reporters he was getting so much publicity, *Snuff* would be held over for another week. After a trip to *The San Diego Union*, publishers assured lobby groups that the newspaper would not advertise *Snuff* should it come to another San Diego theatre.

In Rochester, New York, feelings toward *Snuff* extended to less peaceful protestations. When the movie played at the Holiday Cine theatre there, many women were discouraged to see the picket line

dissolve with no contingency to continue at a later date. A few of the women, doubting that mere picketing would be effective anyway – “considering the violent and threatening nature of *Snuff*” – decided that a more direct confrontation was in order. This led to arrest and imprisonment for a number of RWAVAW members after their destruction of the *Snuff* poster outside the Holiday Cine, and their spray-painting of the doors, chaining them shut, and putting glue in the locks. The defence committee for the jailed women argued that the real crime was *Snuff*.

Situations similar to these were common to Buffalo, Los Angeles, San Jose, and many other cities including Toronto, Canada. While several local governments banned the movie, many others didn't. Robert M. Morgenthau, the district attorney for Manhattan, announced in a news conference that he had determined the on-screen murder of a woman to be a hoax. “It is nothing more than conventional trick photography as is evident to one who sees the movie,” he said, adding, “The actress is alive and well.”

Prompted by continued complaints and petitions, Morgenthau's findings were the conclusion of a one-month-long investigation, in which the ‘murder victim’ had herself been located and interviewed by police.

Shackleton, too, had been traced via the Monarch Releasing Corporation. Ever elusive about the authenticity of the *Snuff* murder – and profitably so – Shackleton had initially told a reporter from *Variety* that, if it was real, “I'd be a fool to admit it. If it isn't real, I'd be a fool to admit it.” However, faced with considerable forfeiture if he insisted on such ambiguity with the police, Shackleton denied that it was a “real” woman who was murdered. “Pickets sell tickets,” he said.

This official acknowledgement and ‘revelation’ didn't, however, deter cinema-goers or the feminist lobby any. Influenced in part by D.A. Emanuel Gellman's admissions in Denver, Colorado – that there being “no place we can go if violence is the only complaint” – the ‘crime’ in *Snuff* shifted from being that of on-screen murder, to one of pornography. Feminists in New York City argued:

Whether or not the death depicted in the current film *Snuff* is real or simulated is not the issue. That sexual violence is presented as

sexual entertainment, that the murder and dismemberment of a woman's body is commercial film material is an outrage to our sense of justice as women, as human beings . . .

A full-scale debate was building in government on the outlawing or censoring of pornographic movies, calling also for the amendment of state obscenity laws to prohibit movies that showed exaggerated violence. Due to the phenomenal success of Gerard Damiano's *Deep Throat* [1972], hardcore pornography was no longer relegated to flea pit peep-shows or stag-nights. Nor were the films mere 10-minute loops, or masqueraded as 'sex instruction'.

The government assembly saw to it that actor Harry Reems was convicted for being part of a nationwide conspiracy in the production and distribution of *Deep Throat* (the film was temporarily banned in New York), and that theatre managers in a number of New Jersey cities were forced to close down the "violent South American-made movie" *Snuff*.

Association by controversy: *Deep Throat* and *Snuff* were often cited back-to-back in reports and in the press. *Snuff* was, to all intents and purposes, violent pornography.

What Shackleton did when he tagged-on the violent ending to the Findlay's *Slaughter* was validate a myth, and the rumour that had been snuff films suddenly developed an identity: even if their existence had yet to be proven, this is what they looked like. With the feminists' call to arms, there would seem to be a whole underground network 'out there' manufacturing snuff for the decrepit pleasures of an audience now jaded with the likes of *Deep Throat*.

Suddenly, snuff was no longer the furtive workings of imagination, or the whisper that had landed in Ed Sanders' ear all those years ago.

Suddenly, it was God's honest truth.

And Allan Shackleton had created it. More to the point, *Snuff* provided the 'evidence' for something that Shackleton had created: Itself.



**IT'S BACK! THE EVIL THAT HAD YOU SCREAMING...**

**IT'S ONLY  
A MOVIE!**

**LAST HOUSE**

**ON  
DEAD  
END**

**STREET**

A Production Concepts Ltd., Presentation • A CINEMATIC RELEASE Starring  
STEVEN MORRISON • DENNIS CRAWFORD • LAWRENCE BORNMAN • JANET SORLEY • PAUL PHILLIPS  
ELAINE NORCROSS • ALEX KREGAR • FRANKLIN STATZ • BARBARA AMUNSEN • GERALDINE SANDERS  
Musical Supervision CLAUDE ARMAND • Written by BRIAN LAWRENCE • Produced by NORMAN F. KAISER

Directed by VICTOR JANOS • COLOR



*hundred bucks for a single screening*

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## 2. Hardcore

The young man, blond, distant, holds the door to his apartment open. Before leaving to rejoin her party downstairs, the birthday girl tells him, "I wish you'd join us." He can't. Stalling, she adds, "I hope that you . . . *have a sweet tooth!*" Shot of a slice of birthday cake on the table. The girl leaves. The young man closes the door. He looks to the cake. Almost smiles. A voice off-screen yells "CUT!"

The scene then cuts away to reveal a studio set and the required technical equipment of motion-picture making. Among the actors and actresses, stage-hands and archetypal boorish director, is the young man from the previous scene: Mark, who works as a focus puller.

The edit from Mark's apartment to the stage floor is a standard film technique and infers 'time lapse'. The clever play on the yelling of the word "cut" and the shot of the sliced cake that preceded it is, however, a sliver of humour acerbic and unique to this picture.

Some 15 years prior to *Snuff*, in 1960, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* was released in Britain. Everybody hated it. Powell, whose



previous movies *The Thief of Baghdad*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *Black Narcissus* and *The Red Shoes* had earned him respect as one of Britain's greatest and best-loved film directors, found himself ostracised overnight. Critics blasted *Peeping Tom* with a vengeance; the public avoided the movie like the plague. Powell's career was all but over.

Regarded now as ahead of its time and a classic, it isn't difficult to see how *Peeping Tom* might have been so vehemently rejected upon its initial release: it's a very sleazy looking movie – a factor that the glorious Technicolour diffuses not a jot – and, as if it isn't enough that the lead character be a homicidal maniac who kills out of some uncontrollable sexual wanting, he is portrayed sympathetically; himself a victim. Furthermore, when he does kill he records the deed on a 16mm camera. And relives the moment again, later, in the mini-auditorium that is his apartment.

Not even *Psycho*, that other shocker of 1960, commanded such depravity.

A human eye in close-up fills the frame. Restless, the closed eyelid jumps open as, on the soundtrack, a camera shutter whirs. A darkened street. A lamplight displays the figure of a prostitute, arms on hips, in the distance. With its back to the camera, a second figure – that of a man – walks into shot. He hesitates. The point-of-view shifts in front and toward him: the man has a cine camera concealed in his overcoat. The camera whirs into action. He moves forward. The POV shifts to that of the cine camera itself, its cross-haired view-finder edging toward the prostitute. Comes the woman's dispassionate warning: "It'll be two quid." She moves off. The camera follows. A back alley. A door. Occasional backward glances from the woman as she makes her way up some stairs. The camera watches. Her stockinged legs. Her skirt, red. Tight. A cosy room. A ticking clock. The woman lights a fire and begins to disrobe. The camera watches. Remains impassive, unblinking, emotionless. The woman takes off her skirt, sits on the bed undoing her blouse. The man's hand reaches into shot. The sound of metal on metal; the firm click of *something locking into place*. Back to the woman. Startled. The camera moves in. Terror. She attempts to edge away, sliding backward down on the bed. The frame fills with her screaming face. The scene suddenly shifts to that of a film projector. A man sits beside the projector – his



The *Daily Mirror* reports a prostitute slaying in *Peeping Tom*.

back to the camera – watching a film play. The film is that of a prostitute on a darkened street, arms on hips, under lamplight . . . *Peeping Tom*. Opening credits.

The story is that of Mark Lewis. The following day, after the prostitute slaying, Mark returns to the scene of the crime and films the police investigation for the documentary he is making. He tells them that he's with *The Observer*.

In his spare time, for extra cash, Mark takes 'tasteful' girlie photographs above a cigar shop. Bored and impatient, he rushes the models through their poses – until, that is, he sees a new girl and insists that she allow him to film her badly disfigured face with his cine camera.

Back at his apartment, Mark bumps into Helen Stephens, a downstairs neighbour who lives with her blind mother. It's Helen's birthday and she requests that the reclusive young man join the party. She visits his flat and he agrees to show her some of his films: silent black and white films of him as a little boy. For the most part the boy appears to be in some distress. Helen asks, "I like to understand what



Mark plays Helen a film of his childhood. *Peeping Tom*.

I'm shown. What was your father trying to do to you photographing you at night?" Mark tells Helen that his whole childhood was filmed; that his father was 'experimenting', constantly working on 'Fear and the Nervous System'. One of the party guests interrupts the conversation and Helen is spurred towards returning to the birthday celebrations.

Mark has promised Vivian, an understudy at the film studio where he works, that he will give her a screen test. The film currently in production is called *The Walls are Closing In*. When everybody else has gone home, Vivian warms up with a dance routine while Mark prepares his 16mm camera. From one of the tripod legs he extends a blade and locks it into place. He films the terrified woman as the blade closes in on her throat.

Mark has bought Helen a belated birthday present: a brooch. When Helen tries it on her lapel, Mark inadvertently mimics her actions, in reverse. Helen's mother warns the girl that she "doesn't trust a man who walks quietly" but Helen goes on a date with Mark anyway. They enjoy themselves. Later, she thanks Mark for a lovely

evening and kisses him on the lips. Mark traces his lips with the camera lens, returns to his room and switches on the projector. Helen's blind mother is waiting in the shadows. She tells Mark that she doesn't like him; that she knows there is something strange about him. Silent film of the screaming Vivian is playing as she speaks. When the film ends, Mark breaks down and sobs, "It's no good. I'm always afraid . . . the lights fade too soon."

"What do you think you spoiled?" the woman asks.

"Opportunity. Now I have to find another one."

At the studio, Mark meets a psychiatrist who had once been a student of Professor Lewis, Mark's father. Before he died, the Professor had been studying scotophobia, "the morbid urge to gaze." Mark asks if this can be cured. It can, but two years is too long a time to wait and Mark leaves the studio despondent. The police, suspicious of this conversation, tail him.

Mark returns to the cigar shop to take more girlie snaps in the room upstairs. He is aware that he is being followed and films the detective waiting outside. "I'm just completing a documentary," he tells Millie, the model. Then he kills her. Mark leaves for his apartment, casually deliberating his every move for the detective.

In Mark's room, an inquisitive Helen is playing the film that sits in the projector. Reaction shots of her terrified face as the (unseen) film plays before her. She backs away.

"Don't let me see you're frightened," demands Mark upon his sudden return.

"Not until I know. That film . . . that film is just a film isn't it? Horrible! Horrible but just a film isn't it?"

Mark confesses: "I must tell someone everything. I'm sorry it has to be you."

Of his father, he explains, "This was his workshop. And you know some of what he did . . . *but not all.*"

His father also made audio recordings. Mark triggers a switch and the sound of himself as a child is heard screaming. "Aged five," Mark acknowledges. Another switch. Sobbing, suffering. "Aged seven."

"What did you do to those girls?" asks Helen. "Show me or I'll remain frightened for the rest of my life."

"Do you know what the most frightening thing in the world is?

It's Fear. So I did something very simple. Very simple." Mark reaches for his camera and tripod and extends the hidden blade. He places the knife tip on Helen's throat. Helen sees her face distorted in a mirror attachment. "I made them watch their own deaths. I made them see their own terror as the spike went in. And if death has a face . . . they saw that, too."

Mark pulls away from Helen. "But not you."

(Under her breath, Helen says – what sounds like: "I adore you.")

The sound of approaching police spurs Mark to rig up the camera and position himself over the tripod blade and mirror. "Helen! I'm afraid!" he calls at the sight of his own scared reflection, ". . . and I'm glad that I'm afraid."

With this, Mark runs himself through with the knife, the camera recording the moment.

Even by today's standards, *Peeping Tom* remains suitably jarring. Aside from the actual sordid storyline, most every frame of the movie is libidinous and there can be no doubt in anybody's mind that Mark's violent actions provide for him a sexual release. For instance,



Mark menaces Helen. *Peeping Tom*.

the knife-edged tripod holds obvious phallic connotations (nowhere more so than in the scene where Mark plays director, auditioning Vivian at the film studio, very slowly drawing his deadly lance erect). Furthermore, replaying the murder scenes allows Mark a kind of masturbatory rapture (by the time his home movies have reached their murderous climax, Mark has quite literally thrust himself from his seat and stands shuddering).

This overt pairing of violence with sexual stimulation would have been enough to warrant that critics frown upon the movie, but Mark *actually filming the death of his victims* was a more flagrant deviation for them to mull over. Much more than the actual act of murder, here lies the focus of critical disdain: screaming faces silent and in private.

Subjected to the years of torture and abuse as a child, as an adult Mark's only reality is that of his father's constant experiments. He sees only to continue the study of 'fear and the nervous system' in an effort to better and beat his father, by actually managing what his father could not: *I'm afraid and I'm glad that I'm afraid*. With this, Mark's 'documentary' is well and truly over.

In more ways than one is *Peeping Tom* ahead of its time. Unbeknownst to the critics who could not validate a movie whose murderous lead character is *not* a villain, Mark Lewis and *Peeping Tom* were to introduce to the cinema an aberration of such magnitude it would remain untouched for over a decade – Snuff.

Despite it having reached US shores in a truncated form in 1962, it would be difficult to believe Allan Shackleton had not seen *Peeping Tom* prior to his reworking of *Slaughter*. Not simply because his film reacquaints cinema-goers with the long dormant theme, but because *Snuff* is also similar in its utilization of a film-within-a-film scenario and has a 'director' commit murder behind-the-scenes. Unlike Michael Powell, however, Shackleton saw a whole slew of movies riding in his wake.

In the years immediately following *Snuff*'s release, *Emanuelle in America*, *Hardcore*, and *Last House on Dead End Street* would take the concept and sell snuff back to the public.

Outside of America, that anybody should have *even contemplated* the existence of snuff films was very much deemed another sliver of oddball, homicidal, fast-food Americana. Entertainment USA. When

*Snuff* was released in Germany, for instance, not only was it subject to a curious title change, *Big Snuff*, but was also known as *American Cannibale*. Indeed, when the Italians came to tackle the theme, they did so with a movie called *Emanuelle in America*.

Constantly fusing the most diverse – and what should be insoluble – elements, the Italian exploitation cinema is quite unlike any other in the world. If it isn't ripping off some blockbusting movie,<sup>1</sup> then it is milking a genre dry with the umpteenth variation on a theme. *Emanuelle in America* is quintessential Italian exploitation.

It was the X-rated sexcapades of Just Jaeckin's French movie *Emmanuelle* that so fired international box office in 1974. Set against the lush surrounds of Thailand, the beautiful newly-wedded Emmanuelle (Sylvia Kristel) abandons innocence – and her husband – for a hedonistic voyage through sexual fulfilment. Her goal: to have sex without having guilt. The popularity of the movie inspired Italian directors to engage upon their own cycle of 'Em(m)anuelle' adventures.

Although arguably it was an Italian picture that lay the foundations for Jaeckin's movie anyway – Cesare Canevari's altogether more sombre *A Man for Emmanuelle* [1969], starring Erika Blanc – the Italian reconstruction began in earnest with the casting of Eurasian beauty Laura Gemser in Albert Thomas' *Black Emanuelle* [1976]. It was the casting of Gemser again in *Black Emanuelle 2 Goes East*, the follow-up of the same year, and Joe D'Amato taking the reigns as director that saw the Italian spin-offs adopting some semblance of continuity: D'Amato would direct Gemser through most of the 'Black Emanuelle' series.<sup>2</sup>

Endearingly true to form, D'Amato steered the hapless heroine into a succession of eclectic adventures. Not content with mere panoramic views, sexual abandon was liable to present itself in the most unlikely of places. And it did – when locking a cheating lover in a sound-proof cell, for instance, tormenting him with torrid sexual spectacles through a one-way mirror, in *Emanuelle's Revenge* [1976]; as a member of an ill-fated team on an expedition through untamed jungles in search of cannibals, in *Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals* [1977]; or, facing a lobotomy after her cover is blown while trying to usurp an international white slavery ring, in *Emanuelle and the White*

*Slave Trade* [1978]. But the nadir was reached with *Emanuelle in America* [1976], an entry into the cycle which seems as unlikely a sex film as possible; downbeat to the point of dejection.

Emanuelle (Gemser), photographer and investigative journalist – an appendage casually established earlier in the series – sets out from her home in New York for California, on the trail of millionaire Eric Van Daren (but not before satiating a potential threat on her life by giving head to a psychopath). With the aid of a miniature camera, and posing as a member of his harem, Emanuelle obtains evidence that Van Daren is an arms smuggler. During a party, one of the girls masturbates a horse for the entertainment of the other guests (“Pedro, I heard your call”). Emanuelle escapes the harem and has sex in Venice with a wealthy Italian aristocrat and his wife, before returning to the United States.

Straight onto another assignment, in the Caribbean, Emanuelle infiltrates a “delightful club for single women.” She wanders around the island with her trusty concealed camera and snaps the clientele each playing out their own little fantasy with the club “stallions”: one woman decorates her man with flower tattoos; another imagines herself part of a multi-racial threesome, seduced by two beefcakes;





another awaits 'Zorro' to 'unmask' himself. Pushing open the door to a final room, Emanuelle sees the woman inside employed in a comparatively straight heterosexual exercise . . . until, that is, she notices what it is the projector is playing in the corner of the room. The woman on the bed licks her lips to a film of soldiers in a dungeon gang-raping, mutilating, and murdering several females. The film is of poor quality, faded, and constantly jerking from scene to scene. Except for the whirring of the projector and the slowly heightening moans of pleasure, the room is silent. Emanuelle's expression drops from that of sneaky naughtiness to despair. She clicks her concealed camera toward the screen (which, in reality, she could not possibly see from where she stands), then closes the door. When Emanuelle's camera antics are discovered, she manages to escape the club by seducing the lesbian proprietress.

Emanuelle tells Frank, her editor, that the photo of a girl in the paper – victim of a possible revenge killing – is, in fact, one of the girls she saw in "that film." She is determined to get to the bottom of it.

"Are you sure it wasn't just a run-of-the-mill pornographic film?" asks Frank.

"You can't get that kind of simulation from a professional actor," replies Emanuelle.

An ex-cop provides Emanuelle with a tip-off, and she heads to Washington for a 'chance' meeting with "The Colonel." In a bedroom romp at his place, Emanuelle implores the Colonel for something more stimulating. He pulls down the shutters and selects a porno movie. Women and transsexuals cavort on the screen. The Colonel sees that Emanuelle is not impressed and so selects another film. "You said you wanted something *really* strong," he says.

This film is similar to that seen on the Caribbean island: a jumpy, faded film of women being tortured. It's over quickly.

"Those pictures – so real! Like they were really happening! It was all so awful . . . but *what a turn-on*. It's the raw horror that excites me."

The Colonel is preparing drinks. He spikes one of them. "I'll make you experience those secret fantasies . . . but you may be scared."

"And isn't being scared . . . exciting?" She tells him before

drifting off, wide-eyed.

Wide-eyed. Emanuelle is in a chauffeur-driven car with the Colonel. Wide-eyed. She is on a private airplane. Wide-eyed. She is in a jeep riding through a jungle, soldiers all around. An isolated building in the distance. A dream-like guitar score plays. Inside the building, with the Colonel by her side, Emanuelle looks through a window into a chamber. It is the torture chamber of the films. Emanuelle wakes up back in The Colonel's bed: "What was it – a nightmare? A dream?"

"No," he tells her. "A little powder – LSD."

Thinking that the whole thing has been nothing more than a drug-induced trip, Emanuelle returns to her editor. Frank has had the photos from the Caribbean island developed. Among them are several shots of the torture chamber; proof of the snuff film (funnily enough, looking much clearer in quality than the film itself).



"It has to be a first!" exclaims Emanuelle. "The scoop of the century!"

But Frank won't publish Emanuelle's story – orders from "upstairs" he tells her. She quits and, with her boyfriend, heads for a desert island; away from it all. But their idyll is soon interrupted by the arrival of a film company. End.

*Emanuelle in America*, like so much European exploitation, exists in a multitude of forms. Quite often – whether it be a horror picture or a porno picture – a director will himself snip scenes out, or even shoot alternating scenes back-to-back, in order to provide the best possible movie for the different softcore and hardcore markets. Leaving, in effect, two or more official cuts of varying running times. If this itself proves a headache for the filmographer, then it is often compounded by the various distribution outlets the movie might acquire, who take it upon themselves to swap and change the picture yet further.

When *Emanuelle in America* received a theatrical release in Britain in the latter months of 1977, its running time was down from an 'original' 100 minutes to 87. As well as the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) excising of the hardcore sex sequences, the plot too was trimmed of all allusion to snuff films. Consequently, Emanuelle's "scoop of the century" with regard to the Senator's employment of 'elaborate seduction techniques', left a lot to be desired.

The Dutch video print of *Emanuelle in America* (Video for Pleasure) is the source for the above synopsis. For the usually reliable Dutch distributors, this print is sadly lacking in all hardcore sex departments, and much of the more extreme snuff footage has also been cut. Other prints elsewhere in the world reveal yet further alternatives of the movie: some retain *all* the hardcore sex footage and *none* of the snuff, others play to the contrary. A Venezuelan video label (Telehobby International), offers possibly the most complete version available, having both all the sex *and* snuff intact. Even an original Italian language print – made available for inclusion in this book – shows severe trimming of the hardcore sex sequences, as well as a different edit of Emanuelle's first encounter with the snuff footage.

In its uncut form, the scene in which Emanuelle first happens



Snuff film in production. *Emanuelle in America*.

upon the mysterious film, far excels the revulsion of seeing, say, a foetus being ripped from a pregnant woman and devoured in D'Amato's own *Anthropophagous the Beast* [1980]. At least that is sheer honest-to-goodness outrage; *Emanuelle in America*, on the other hand, attempts to present its outrage within a deliberately erotic context. The sight of women having their breasts blow-torched, their buttocks branded with irons, being beaten, being strangled while gang-raped – as seen in the Caribbean 'singles club' film – to the increasing orgasmic sounds of a woman watching, is disturbing even by D'Amato's salacious standards.

The second display of snuff footage occurs in the Senator's bedroom. The camera-happy Emanuelle – whose cockleshell necklace camera is a technological marvel – snaps more pictures as the projected film bleeds into silent life with floggings and the vaginal impaling of women onto huge wooden dildos. This footage is progressively more unpleasant than the last, not to mention *more cinematic*, as can be seen in one tightly edited sequence: a hand in

close-up reaches for a meat-hook; the camera cuts to long shot to reveal a naked woman bound with her hands behind her back; cut to close-up of the meat-hook being inserted between the woman's thighs; cut to close-up of a pulley device above the woman; cut to long-shot and the meat-hook being attached to the pulley and the pulley lifting the woman off the ground. Quickly, the camera sweeps around the torture chamber to reveal snippets of more murder and mayhem, and a soldier swigging heartily from a bottle.

In the sequence where a drugged Emanuelle is taken to watch the manufacture of the films themselves, an open-ended dildo is pushed into the throat of a woman and boiling oil poured down, while another is spreadeagled and has both her nipples sliced off with a knife (convincingly realised by special effects wizard Maurizio Trani). Throughout this carnage, as she stands watching in her acid stupor, Emanuelle has her underwear drawn slowly down; the Senator caressing the long slender legs in altruistic foreplay, then having slow, deep sex with her.

It is this systematic bridging of beautiful models (*all* women here are beautiful), violent death and vacant orgasm, that allows *Emanuelle in America* the truly unsettling and shocking status it so deserves. Not only does it present snuff as a possible means of sexual titillation for those characters in the movie, but also that it may be titillation for us, the viewer – punctuating the objectification of a somnambulist Emanuelle with the carnage taking place in the next room.

Swamped in his bid to kill more than one market with any one given movie – hence the cacophonous merging of extreme elements – D'Amato invariably leaves Emanuelle behaving like an insatiable misfit in a world of freaks.

*Last House on Dead End Street* is one of the great mysteries of cinema. It was made in 1977 by Victor Janos and released as a 'cult classic'. One can safely assume that this, together with the movie's title and the catch-line gracing the one-sheets – 'It's only a movie!' – were an attempt to sucker people into believing the picture to be a follow-up to Wes Craven's successful *Last House on the Left* [1972].

That the movie has now made it to cult status is a different matter. Neither director Janos, the players, nor any of the other people listed in the credits are familiar. So limited was its initial release and so obscure is the movie, that for years *Last House on Dead Street*

was familiar only in notoriety and title alone. Few had heard of it, let alone seen it. And, of the few that had heard of it, fewer still believed it existed. Slightly less elusive, by the early 1980s the movie found itself a marginal release on video cassette.

If Allan Shackleton had taken up the offers he claimed to have received and made a sequel to *Snuff*, then *Last House on Dead End Street* would be it.

Credits on a black screen give way to the lavish architecture of a huge old house. Synthesized vocals rise choir-like as ex-jailbird Terry Hawkins – college girl pimp and drug pusher – wanders into shot. He bears a grudge toward the system and promises himself, “I’m gonna give them something they never dreamed of . . . something *nobody’s* ever done.” A heartbeat pounds into the soundtrack. Terry breaks into the house and pushes the blind owner down a flight of stairs. Next, he is seen engaged in a dialogue with Pat and Kathy:

“I have an idea of how we can make good use of this building,” says Terry. “I wanna make films, really weird ones . . . and you two can be in ‘em.”

“Maybe it’ll break up the monotony,” replies one girl.

“Hey man, sounds wild,” replies the other.

Terry has a meeting with Ken – a guy who says ‘daddio’ and is into “tits like bananas . . . and leather.” Ken tells Terry that “chicks dig danger and that’s what you advertise, man – Danger.”

Terry used to make stag films but couldn’t sell a damn one. “Nobody’s interested in sex any more,” he tells Ken, “they’re lookin’ for something else.”

Ken puts Terry in touch with Nancy Palmer, a chick he picked up in a bar once; “turns out her old man gets paid from a little fag in the city to make porno movies for these hot-to-trot rich bastards who have nothin’ better to do but sit around an’ watch pornographic films . . . all day.” (An oratory which sounds to have been dubbed by two different people in at least three different takes: Ken’s voice fluctuates and warps admirably.) He goes on to explain how he spent six months inside for sodomizing a dead calf in a slaughterhouse. Footage of a slaughterhouse.

One of the girls from earlier chews over whether she should do ‘weird films’.

Another friend, Bill, is reluctant to let Terry through the door. He remembers how Terry ran out on him with all his film that time.

"How'd you like to make some money doin' what you do best?" Terry needs a cameraman and, since Bill's the best cameraman he knows in the business-

"I'm the *only* one you know," snaps Bill.

Terry drags on his cigarette, "So you must be the best."

Elsewhere, another meeting is taking place, between Steve from the city and Jim Palmer. Steve is under pressure from "certain people." He tells Palmer, "I hope you have something interesting to show me?"

"The business isn't what it used to be," whines Palmer. "Too much competition. People . . . people's tastes have become awfully hard to satisfy."

"You're getting paid to satisfy those tastes, aren't you, buddy boy?"

Palmer sets a projector in motion. "Well. Just watch."

The film that plays is of a woman waking from her bed. She rubs the sleep from herself ("She got rheumatism?"), begins to peel off her clothes, steps into a bubble bath and rubs her breasts in the suds. The exposure is bad; there is no sound; a hair on the lens is in shot throughout. Steve tells Palmer that it's tenth-rate porn, it's crap,



A victim of *Last House on Dead End Street*.

and he'd better come up with something good.

A second movie begins. This time its a lesbian flick with Palmer's wife, Nancy. The film has lost the hair on the lens but the editing is all over the place. One moment the two women are fully clothed, standing side by side, the next they are completely naked and holding each other apprehensively. A stagehand is clearly seen prompting a dog onto the set for a "homely touch," explains Palmer. "Just look at that intensity."

"I'm not interested in *intensity*," barks Steve. "I want action, angles, something different that nobody's done before."

Cue: Terry Hawkins.

Back at the old house on the hill, Terry hands out clear facemasks to Kathy and Pat.

"You're making me feel . . . *weird*," one says.

Against a pillar in the middle of the room, the blind owner of the house stands tied. The two girls begin to caress him, wooing him. Terry moves in (he has the most elaborate mask of all) and grabs hold of the guy's throat. Bill the cameraman stops filming. Incredulous, he pulls away his mask, smiles, then continues.

A knock at the Palmers door. It's Terry. Nancy asks him, "How d'you do it? Film it? It looks so real. The way you strangled that man."

"I'll . . . I'll let you in on a little secret if you promise not to tell anybody . . . They look real because they *are* real."

"That's not funny!"

"It's not supposed to be funny. It's supposed to be *real*. That's exactly what it is." Terry then snaps at some hitherto unknown double-dealing. "Did you really think you'd get away with that? All that crap you and your husband were tryin' to pull . . . tryin' to pull on me with your faggoty friend, Steve. Did you think I'd fall for that crap – did you *really think* you'd get away with it? Take credit for my film and tryin' to cut me out by sayin' it's your film?"

Estranged tinkling on the soundtrack.

Later, Terry calls Steve and tells him to be at *the house* at 6pm, and to bring Palmer along, Palmer's wife, and that other girl too, Suzy (?). It'll be worth his while.

Every sound in the Last House is tainted by electronic echo.



Steve arrives and wanders around. "Terry? Terry, where are you? I don't have time to play games." A bright light is flashed in his face and Pat or Kathy clubs him. When he comes round, he is tied up, hands above head. Mr Palmer, Nancy and Suzy are tied up alongside. "If this is your idea of a joke," says Palmer, "don't you think it's gone about far enough?"

More lights. Bill the cameraman films through a hole in the wall. The girls lounge around. Terry steps out of the shadows. "You've always had a special place in your heart for my movies haven't you, Steve?" he says. "You've always been amazed at how real they look. Haven't you. Steve. Well, tonight I'm gonna let you all in on a little secret . . ."

Suzy is cut down and taken to another room. Heartbeat. Suzy's face fills the frame as hands lift the different death masks to it. Everything is black except for the figures. Terry spouts some existential gibberish. Someone else speaks but the reverb has become so prominent that it is impossible to tell just who it might be or quite what it is they're saying. Sounds like: *tell me the answer the virgin bride tell me the answer*. Ken (daddio/dead calf sodomy) appears with a branding iron, moves toward Suzy with it as Pat and Kathy pull aside her blouse. Screams as the iron burns her exposed breast. Cut to the other room and Steve, Palmer, Nancy still tied up.

*the ultimate answer is me Terry oh yes me*

"Now we're all gonna go outside and make a little movie," Terry lights up a cigarette, "and *you're* gonna direct." Points to Palmer. The girls giggle behind their masks as Terry sits the terrified guy into a chair and tells him he might even win an Oscar. "We'll do a love scene first, okay Palmer? Move the girls into the centre . . . Start directing, Palmer. *Start directing!* Wave your arms *and direct!*"

Palmer's pitiful direction consists of having his arms waved around by Terry. At the far end of the 'set', the girls 'act' by leaping up and down on the spot and flicking their long hair around. Everyone is having fun . . . except Palmer. "He doesn't wanna make movies," says Ken, "he wants to be in 'em." Bill zooms in, but Palmer attempts to run away. The whirring camera traces Palmer's capture. He is then made to parade through an impromptu TV commercial, as Ken demonstrates how dirty Palmer's shirt becomes when he stabs him. The girls laugh. Terry suddenly leaps towards the bleeding Palmer, incensed.



The killers prepare to operate on Nancy. *Last House on Dead End Street*.

"*I'M DIRECTING THIS FUCKIN' MOVIE!*" he insists, shaking the wounded man. Kicking him to the floor. "*I'm directing this fuckin' movie.*" The girls shriek "*Harder!*" and Terry pummels the dying man some more.

Elsewhere, Steve comforts Nancy: "This is no joke! This isn't even a movie . . . This is for real!"

Wiping his hands clean of blood, Terry appears and promises, "You bet your ass this is for real. I'm still a little concerned about how I'm going to go about tryin' to sell this movie, but things like that have a way of working themselves out, don't they? You're next, Mrs Palmer."

Heartbeat. Mrs Palmer is strapped to a table. The film crew display surgical instruments. Ken enters into a little facial graffiti with a scalpel. Bill films. Nancy's face is a lattice of wounds and blood. Terry takes a saw and hacks a leg off at the ankles (the leg is obscured by a sheet). Nancy loses consciousness and the screams stop. She is revived with smelling salts to scream again. In the most chilling moment, when Ken approaches with a pair of industrial shears, Nancy is calm, resigned to the fact she's going to die. Her bloodied face betrays not a hint of terror, just a distant sadness. She

closes her eyes as Ken pinches through the white sheet.

"Hi, Steve. Welcome back to the land of the living. How ya bin? Scared?" Laughs Terry, holding up Nancy's mutilated corpse. Steve screams. Terry wrestles him to his knees. One of the girls – Kathy or Pat – removes her mask. Stern faced, she approaches the whimpering Steve, unzips her fly and unbuttons her blouse. Protruding from her fly is a goat's hoof. Terry forces Steve to fellate the hoof. The girl remains impassive as, on her head, like horns, the other girl holds two more hooves. Everyone else is half-hysterical while Steve gags and splutters on the *faux* member.

"Feelin' *horny*, Steve?" Even Bill has to quit filming as he doubles over.

Steve makes good the opportunity to escape. He stumbles down a corridor, wanders into a dark room. Lights burst on, silhouetting the figure of a man with a film camera. Steve whimpers. Terry, Ken and the girls step forth – not laughing. Terry holds a power drill and drills right through one of Steve's open eyes. Heartbeat. The figures step backward slowly, one-by-one, into the light. Only Ken stops for a moment. The end credits roll as a voice-over informs that Terry, Ken, Bill, Kathy and Pat "were all later apprehended and are now serving a 999-year sentence in the State Penitentiary." Crime don't pay.

If someone said *here, make a movie – as wild a movie as you possibly can but stay inside the law*, would it be anywhere quite as lurid as this? Director Victor Janos looks to have been approached with that exact same question and come up with *Last House on Dead End Street*: As wild a movie as you could possibly imagine. It also appears to have been shot in sequence, starring non-actors, utilizing no real sets, with no money.

It ought to go spiralling towards the floor, flat on its face, but it doesn't.

The barren look coupled with the desolate, no-hope feel, lends the movie a quality that betrays all technical shortcomings. *Last House on Dead End Street* has a carnivorous negativity about it – one that suggests vileness is more vile than it is, and fiction just might be fact ("Director Victor Janos must be one sick fucker or else he knows how to fake it *really* well . . ." writes Steve Pulchalski in *Slimetime* [#17]). *Last House on Dead End Street* is so barren and despondent it has the power to chew on the mind and fog the vision.

It never looks as if Victor Janos is entirely sure of what he's doing. Not only does he fail to 'introduce' any of his characters prior to dumping them all in the opening scenes, but for the first 20-minutes-or-so, these characters appear to be pursuing some other movie. When, for instance, a bitter Terry Hawkins rambles on about how he's "gonna give them something they never dreamed of," several 'flash-forward' sequences punctuate his monologue – only the scenes *don't* appear later (and if they're *not* flash-forwards, what are they?). And Ken's hip-speak, enunciating every second word with "daddio" or "man" or a furious "yeah!" – after his first dialogue, this too has been mysteriously shuffled out of the pack. And Pat's protracted turmoil over whether or not she ought to do "weird films" corrects itself suddenly, off-camera, and without any further ado.

On top of that – with the exception of maybe Terry and his increasingly lucid maniacal portrait – the obviously inexperienced players quickly give up on 'trying to act' altogether and, outside of laughing or screaming, content themselves to wander through the picture dream-like, void of expression.

Which is an invaluable asset for a movie quickly beginning to look as though it was penned by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí.

*Last House on Dead End Street* is a believable glimpse into an unbelievable world. With its use of empty sets (only the Palmers' apartment is seen to have stuff like furniture) and the strange unexplained nuances – like the face-masks and the ritualistic way they are swapped around – the picture conjures feelings of there being more to all of this than meets the eye. And because we don't know what it is doesn't mean it doesn't exist. These people are so crazy they are liable to do most anything anyway.

There remains the question: Just who is Victor Janos? Any attempt to trace any of the names behind *Last House on Dead End Street* will lead no further than the credits themselves; they are all obviously pseudonymous.

Certainly, *Dead End Street* looks every bit to be an American film. The players look American, they dress American, they sport American haircuts; the Palmers' apartment is furnished American. With the one possible exception being its use of full-frontal nudity – outside of porno, an attribute more common to that of European filmmaking – *Last House on Dead End Street* is an American movie

and very much the product of a team working on native soil; it has none of the trappings that come, say, with an alien view of an alien place (Spanish director Jorge Grau springs to mind and his curiously romantic vision of England in *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue*: a pleasant land replete with pastures green).

The fact that *Dead End Street* is dubbed with an English-speaking soundtrack offers no proof that, by origin, this is a non-English speaking movie. Undoubtedly conceived as a means to ride the *Snuff* publicity bandwagon, and in an attempt to fashion itself to a greater degree, there is every likelihood that it too was filmed without sound and later dubbed into English for that mysterious, imported, 'where life is cheap' quality.

When the shift in manner occurs after the opening sequences and all the players lose emotion and conscience, it is difficult – really difficult – to accept that Janos has not deliberately forsaken the urgency to make an out-and-out cash-in for, instead, a more autonomous picture. It would have been so much easier for it to remain as it had been going thus far – with 'proper' characters and a narrative and all. As it stands, *Dead End Street* is deserving of cult movie status. It is a genuine curio. It also has forced camera angles, an estranged pseudo-classical score, and is brimming with compelling subtleties (like the incessant laughing). Whatever he originally intended, *Last House on Dead End Street* does now reflect a genuine *auteurism* on the part of Victor Janos; this isn't simply a quickfire grab at making a few bucks, this is the honest result of a creative endeavour. It has a *noir* quality about it. The unsettling intensity is too well orchestrated to be dismissed as a mere *chance* atmosphere. Even the violence is surprisingly curtailed: the blood-letting being worked into the claustrophobia of the final reels, locked like the victims within the confines of the Last House itself.

It's a great shame that the critical indifference toward horror movies in general should be responsible for relegating this to the limbo in which it finds itself. *Last House on Dead End Street* stands as one of those rare and truly innovative examples of the genre. That is, it isn't funny or a send-up, nor does it harbour any reassuring creature comforts – it is, instead, genuinely distressing.

*But so bleak?* No. Beneath its humourless premise there runs a virulent torrent of very black humour, and – with Jim Palmer trying

to peddle his latest godawful porn movies to a non-too impressed Steve – at least one honest gag. Alas, things are just too bleak to get much funnier than that . . .

Another movie released in 1977, Cláudio Cunha's *Snuff – Vitimas do Prazer* (which translates as 'Snuff – Victims of Pleasure'), hails from Brazil and proves to be a fictional melodrama about unscrupulous film producers who agree to film the murder of their main actress. Sources have it that *Vitimas do Prazer* is "a mildly entertaining thriller." One of the lead actresses, Rossana Ghessa, started her career in important Brazilian movies of the mid-60s but now appears in exploitation vehicles like this, and *Women in Fury* (where she plays the lesbian warden who seduces heroine Suzane Carvalho). Director Cunha later went on to make hardcore porn comedies.

Paul Schrader, a former critic who wrote several scripts, including Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* [1976], made his directorial debut in 1978 with the hard-hitting *Blue Collar*. *Hardcore* (receiving a theatrical release in Britain as *The Hardcore Life*), the following year, marked Schrader's second picture as director. It tells the story of Jake Van Dorn (George C. Scott), a prosperous businessman whose daughter's sudden disappearance takes him searching through a world of pornography; a world totally alien and increasingly bizarre.

*Hardcore* opens to the snow-covered, picture-postcard town of Grand Rapids, Michigan; a deeply religious community where children sledge down hills and cabins are made of log. "Precious Memories" sings Susan Raye in the sleepy little country & western hymnal. Nearing Christmas, the Van Dorn family get together and sit around the TV set (a rare treat) watching some glitzy dance extravaganza, while in another room, two of the elders argue over the scriptures.

Van Dorn waves to his only daughter as the Grands Rapids Youth Calvinists head off for a convention in California. As soon as the bus sets on its way, the kids all cheer and a wireless plays a beach party instrumental. Once in California, Kristen Van Dorn is asked by a friend if she has ever played "chicken" with a boy. She tells her no, what's that?

During lunch, after Sunday service, Van Dorn gets a phonecall from



'Slave of Love'.

California. Kristen's gone missing. Van Dorn flies out. It seems that Kristen left an amusement park with an older boy whom nobody knows. The Los Angeles police tell Van Dorn that they have assigned two men to the job, but it might be an idea if he hires a private detective; someone who can channel all of his energies into searching for the girl. He hires streetwise Andy Mast (Peter Boyle).

"Let me get the picture here . . . let me guess," says Mast. "Let me visualise your daughter: Nice and clean girl . . . model daughter . . . never had a rebellious or impure thought . . . didn't *fuck around* —"

"Watch your language (you bastard)."

At the request of Mast, Van Dorn returns home to see if he can come up with anything there. Time passes. His friends in the community tell him that he can't dwell on Kristen all the time; that it's the Lord's way of testing him. He's got to have faith. Finally, Mast comes to Grand Rapids. He's found something. He asks Van Dorn if he has ever seen a pornographic movie, a hardcore film, and takes him to an Adult Movie arcade. Mast makes him watch a silent film

in which an obviously spaced-out Kristen is having her clothes removed by a young man. The girl is naked. A second boy, blond haired, removes his patent red leather boots. The two of them caress the scared girl. Van Dorn screams at Mast to turn it off.

"Where is she?"

"I don't know?"

"Where d'you get that film?"

"Bought it in a store in L.A." says Mast, pulling the reel from Van Dorn's reach. "*I gotta keep it.*"

"Who made it?"

"I don't know. Slow down! A film like this – 8mm film – costs 200-300 dollars to make, sold right out in a store, shown on peep machines – it's impossible to track down. Nobody makes it. Nobody shows it. Nobody *sees* it! It's like it doesn't even exist."

"What's it called . . ."

"It was called *Slave of Love* when I bought it. Next time it's sold it'll be called something else . . . There's a lot of strange things happening in this world, a lot of things you don't know about in Grand Rapids . . ."

Mast later shows Kristen's photograph to porno producer Bill Ramada, telling him "this is jailbait." Ramada tells Mast he hasn't seen the girl before, but allows the detective to sit and watch the completion of a movie he's working on. The private detective is thrown off the case when, tired of waiting at home, Van Dorn flies to L.A. and surprises him in bed with a young girl.

Distractedly cruising the red-light streets – the pimps and the whores, the pussy clubs and strip joints – Van Dorn wanders into a sex boutique. He asks the cashier if he has a movie called *Slave of Love*. "What you see is what we got," says the cashier. He then tries a couple of 'body-to-body contact' clubs with his questions, but nobody knows "nuthin' about nuthin'." He loses his temper, gets thrown out of the 'Stairway to Love' and onto the street.

The choral singing that emanates from the TV set in Van Dorn's hotel room is warped by the threatening synth score on the soundtrack. It inspires Van Dorn to get himself some natty threads and head out to see Bill Ramada, fabricating a story about wanting to invest money in the porno industry. Ramada – who had a big hit in Detroit with *Little Oral Annie* – doesn't need a partner, but offers the potential investor some advice: "Start small. Start with the kiddie-porn



and work your way up."

Posing as a film producer wanting to cast young male models for an explicit action adult feature, Van Dorn puts an ad in the trade papers. All throughout the day, a string of people turn up for audition before a familiar-looking blond haired 'Jism Jim' (Will Walker) shows. In his ruse as producer, Van Dorn shows Jism a frame blow-up from *Slave of Love*.

"I never even saw it, I only got 25 dollars for the whole goddamn thing."

"Well, I liked you," says Van Dorn. "I also liked the girl, I really though she was good. Er . . . is she still around . . . still working?"

"Just wait a minute. I need the work and I wanna be in your picture, but *that is one bitch I will not work with again*. One freaky bitch. I don't know what she was into, or what she was on, I just don't want to have anything to do with her again. You know what she did to me? . . . My *prick* was so *red* and *sore*, I couldn't walk for a goddamn week."

Van Dorn brings a table lamp down across Jism's head. He beats a name out of him: Niki.

Niki (Season Hubley) is a prostitute working at the 'Les Girls' club. For a fee, she agrees to help Van Dorn find Kristen. The couple end up in San Francisco chasing another name: Ratan.

Rehired by a concerned brother-in-law in Grand Rapids, private detective Mast turns up at Van Dorn's motel room door. He warns him about Ratan. "You know you can buy *anything* in this world. You can buy child-whores . . . slaves . . . you can have people raped. One of the men that supposedly arranges such things is called Ratan."

Contrary to his suggestions, Van Dorn goes in search of Ratan. He meets Tod (Gary Rand Graham) in the back of a sex store.

Tod asks, "You lookin' for real excitement?"

"Yeah. I heard that you and Ratan just came back from Mexico and you got a picture where a girl-"

"Who told you this?"

"A hooker."

"Er . . . I don't know no Ratan, but I may be able to help you out – it's not me, you understand, I'm just helping out a friend. It'll cost you 100 bucks for a single screening."

"Is this the one with the girl named Kristen in it?"



Kristen and Ratan in *El Matador*. *Hardcore*.

"Uh huh. You got the money?"

Tod arranges that Van Dorn be back at 8pm. With the money.

"You ain't never gonna have no thrill like this."

In a room over a brothel, two guys sit in anticipation. Tod leads a third. Van Dorn, inside, then turns off the light. He flicks on an audio cassette player and a film projector. A screen flickers into life. On it,

the frightened eyes of a woman peer from within the confines of a leather face-mask. The camera cuts to reveal that the woman is sitting, hands bound, on the edge of a bed. She has boots on. A man walks into shot with a whip and binds the woman's boots to the floor. The projector whirs and the cassette plays its Mexican song. A second man, smartly dressed in a white suit, walks into shot. He pulls a knife and stabs the first man in the belly. He then tears the mask from the woman. She screams. Then he cuts her throat.

It isn't Kristen. Almost relieved, Van Dorn cups his head in hand as the images from the screen dance back at him.

Tod has gone. Van Dorn traces him to an SM brothel where he pummels from him Ratan's whereabouts: the 'El Matador'.

Mast arrives on the scene in time to see Van Dorn enter the El Matador club. Inside the club, in front of the stage where naked girls perform live, a white-suited man sits with his back to the door. By his side, a long-haired girl. Van Dorn calls out and the man leaps to his feet pulling from his jacket a switchblade. The girl jumps up next to him. Kristen. Ratan swings his blade and runs for the door. Out on the street, Mast drops to his knee and pulls from his sock a revolver, which he fumbles to the floor before firing off a shot. Hit, Ratan stumbles into the traffic before collapsing in the foyer of a boutique, beneath the words: "Love Act."

In the club, Van Dorn comforts his daughter. "I know it's been terrible for you, but it's over."

"Don't touch me, you *cocksucker*! You didn't give a *fuck* about me before . . . I'm with people who love me now!" she snarls.

But Van Dorn *does* care, it's been his stubborn pride that has prevented him from showing it in the past, he says. Sobbing, Kristen asks daddy to take her home.

Once outside, Van Dorn breaks the promise he made earlier to Niki, that he would take care of her when all of this was over. As Niki turns away, he asks Mast if "maybe you could do something for her . . . maybe money, or . . ."

"Go home, Pilgrim," smiles Mast. "Do what you do. You don't belong here."

When Kristen leaps to her feet in the El Matador, just as her father calls out for Ratan, she exhibits the exact demeanour and expression

as that of the 'sexually insane' Lynn Lowry at the climax of David Cronenberg's *Shivers* [1975]. A lost five months and Kristen is innocent without innocence. It's the only time that *Hardcore* really acknowledges the girl's existence – perhaps an intention on Paul Schrader's part: up until this point the girl has remained a ghost whose only image for the audience is the blow-up from *Slave of Love* that Van Dorn brandishes around town. When the girl disappears, it is almost to the echo of a resounding *Kristen who?*

It could be that Kristen is intended as a metaphor for Van Dorn's own religious beliefs, that his search for the girl be a voyage of self-discovery and affirmation of faith (as is constantly assimilated in the movie's first half, when Van Dorn's friends remind him that it is "God's way" and again with Peter Boyle's private eye referring to him as "Pilgrim"). Schrader's work constantly draws upon such obsessions as inner torment and triumph of the spirit. In *Taxi Driver* Travis Bickle must either kill the President or wipe-out a child prostitution ring to be at peace with himself. Drawing upon the writer/director's own strictly religious upbringing in Grand Rapids, *Hardcore* sees an even greater embracing of these obsessions.

Taken as some kind of inner purge on Schrader's part, *Hardcore* could be viewed as a pacey, mindless romp. But, if latter-day parable is what it is, any message it may carry is lost, drenched in the sort of hysteria attributable to tabloid sensationalism: In *Hardcore*, skin-flicks are a natural step toward kiddy-porn and snuff films, with Van Dorn barely managing a breath before the search for his daughter has whisked him from a home-town Adult Movie Arcade to Endsville USA, and most every conceivable depravity. And it is this sweeping dot-to-dot descent into the maelstrom that ultimately stretches the suspension of disbelief to the point of no-return.

*Hardcore* is at its most sober and compelling in its opening half, before the Calvinist father has adjusted to the nightlife of the big city. Here, the movie does carry conviction with the naïve Van Dorn meeting anonymity at every turn ("don't know nuthin' about nuthin'"). He is painfully obtrusive amongst the sleaze that surrounds him, looking every bit the out-of-towner. The viewer can only sympathize with his frustrations as, having been left with no alternative, he actually takes a room and pays one of the whores to 'talk'. But the whore's idea of conversation doesn't extend beyond talking dirty. Enraged, Van Dorn storms through the building and gets

himself thrown out. His frustration is conveyed exquisitely in the scene that follows, where, pulling himself up off the sidewalk, he sees the cops cruising nonchalantly by in their squad car, and the heavy slipping back into the bright lights and shadows.

The streets Van Dorn wanders ooze sleaze: sex-aids, rack upon rack of porn filth, two-bit ass, pimps, hustlers, movies and live girls. It's the underbelly of the big city for the Grand Rapids man, where honesty and God and good-will to all men don't mean diddly-squat. Yet, after he takes this first beating, Van Dorn seems to inherit a miraculous capacity for lying, cheating and beating villains at their own game. He also becomes a master of most anything he puts his hand to, from his doubling as a potential film investor and barging in on a millionaire porno producer, through to getting himself in on a snuff film screening.

It is here, in a smoky little room above a brothel, that *Hardcore* further defines the image of snuff. For a huge fee, a small group (including Van Dorn himself, an audience of three) can sit through one screening of a short, ropy, silent film of murder. The South American music playing on the cassette reinforces the impression that the film was produced someplace far away, where life is cheap. That snuff should be a denizen of the darker recesses of sexuality and male chauvinism, is also subtly expressed in the film's setting (a bedroom, on a bed) and that, of the two victims, it is the female who is attired in fetishistic leather mask and boots, and is shown to be frightened (the male is killed instantly).

Wielding a phallic switchblade or not, it is unlikely that as powerful a figure as Ratan – or *any* figure, for that matter – would allow their identity to be filmed committing the act of murder (and in his favourite white suit, no less). This said, however, the roller coaster ride Van Dorn has taken in order to get this far, grants that this snuff footage be jolting in its sobriety. There are no frills to it, no POV shots (close-ups – that of the victim's masked and unmasked face – excepted). It is just one room, one setting, one camera.

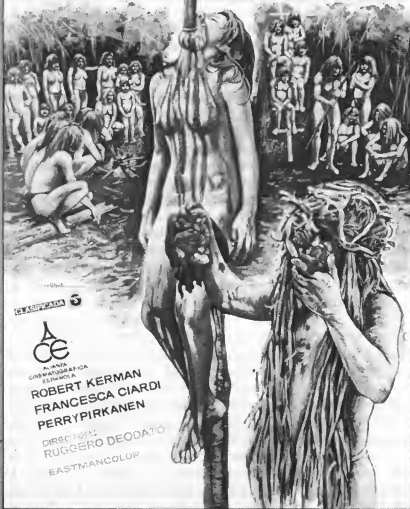
A common filmmaking embellishment is to juxtapose the savage with the tender. The use of the jolly, uplifting music that plays during the snuff film, does more than provide a geographical signpost for the film's supposed South American origins: it is a measure of the brutality of the piece. If the absence of sound is used to insinuate a

film-within-a-film – and a cold, dour film at that – then to place upon it a banal singalong (such as that playing on the tape recorder) emphasizes the sheer gratuity of those images. It is a technique that commands a certain abstraction, while bordering on the ridiculous. Because of this, it is not often employed in cinema treatment of the snuff concept. Snuff remains too powerful a form to dilute in any way; better to keep it cold and emotionless.

*Emanuelle in America*, *Last House on Dead End Street*, and *Hardcore* – such are the movies to be directly inspired by *Snuff* and what *Snuff* insinuated: that death was being exploited on film as pornography for a specific market.<sup>3</sup> Except now, with these three movies, snuff wasn't bold and brash and plastered all over the one-sheets; snuff was underground. If the logistics of Shackleton's ad campaign had been absurd, he had at least provided a solid precursor in snuff *as a viable commodity*. These movies saw to it that snuff was hidden; was small; was one room and one camera; was black and white; was silent; was colour with bad editing; was expensive. Was a commodity.

Other movies followed – as will be seen in the next chapter – but they incorporated the theme as more a matter of course than an isolated, horrifying possibility. The affiliation between the above movies asserted a kind of factual basis. Other movies would treat snuff as simply another accepted aberration. Indeed, just another slice of homicidal, oddball Americana.

# HOLOCAUSTO CANIBAL



CENSURADO 3



PLANTA  
CINEMATOGRAFICA  
ESPAÑOLA

ROBERT KERMAN  
FRANCESCA CIARDI  
PERRYPIRKANEN

DIRECTOR:  
RUGGERO DEODATO  
EASTMANCOLOR

*a great sunday night show for the whole family*

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### 3. Thrill Kill Video

There could well be an element of truth to what the photo-journalist says in Oliver Stone's 1986 picture *Salvador*: that the one photograph, that one truly great shot, is worth dying for (before throwing himself into the path of a jet fighter attack, camera clicking). It could be that such action is the necessary catharsis for a true artist and the only genuine artistic expression – selfless and absolute. Or it could be a totally futile act because it is the death of the artist that draws the admirers and not the picture itself. In the case of Carl Denham – the ruthless filmmaker in *King Kong* [1933] who manages to capture the giant ape and take it to New York – the necessity to document and the struggle for that Great Shot are synonymous with ambition: Denham isn't going to die for anybody let alone his art, *but he wants that picture*.

In Noel Black's *Cover Me Babe* [1970], Robert Forster plays a cameraman obsessed with filming the 'act of life' and will do anything, set up any situation, in order to capture it. He films a



mother in tears after finding her son drowned on a beach, and a man leaping to his death from a Los Angeles hotel window. In one scene, he explains his obsession (a monologue echoed in Larry Cohen's later *Special Effects*): "I turn on the camera and hope to God something happens before the film runs out. . . All the world is a giant movie screen. The greatest scene ever performed anywhere was Jack Ruby's killing of Lee Harvey Oswald before millions of viewers on television. No actors. No writers. Just life and death . . ."

Criminal obsessives lie at the heart of Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* [1979], a movie in which filmmakers kill people to win awards.

In New York City, news circulates that a three-man, one-woman team of documentary filmmakers are reported missing. Renowned for their hard-hitting work in Africa and Vietnam, the crew's latest project had taken them to the jungles of South America. A rescue party is mobilised. In their search, Professor Monroe, Chako and Miguel, encounter the fetid corpse of Felipe, a guide from the previous expedition.

Arriving at the village of the Yacumo tribe, the men find more evidence that the documentary team has passed that way. Chako warns the Professor, "Something says your friends made quite a mess of things." They move on.

At a river, the men see two warring cannibal tribes. They win an uneasy alliance with the Yamamonos after opening fire on the Shamataris and driving them away. The Yamamonos – the Tree People – welcome the white men into their village. Following some frolicking with the females of the tribe, Monroe discovers the fate of the previous expedition: skeletal remains, constructed into some kind of revered totem, complete with cameras and unopened cans of film. The search over, the crew returns to civilisation with the film reels.

Although not all the negative has been developed, BDC-TV in New York City wish to screen the footage and request that Professor Monroe piece it into some coherent form. Monroe studies one of the team's earlier efforts, *The Last Road To Hell*, to glean a little more background information on the ill-fated filmmakers.

Being quite a tight-knit pot-boiler thus far, director Deodato takes an unusual step in steering *Cannibal Holocaust* into a new and highly unprecedented direction. He begins a new film.

Monroe sits watching *The Last Road To Hell*. It is a grotesque



documentary set in a Third World country where men, women and boys are being murdered at the hands of a dictatorship. The credits to the film roll as a firing squad of soldiers cuts down a line of men. A boy is shot point-blank through the heart by another soldier. An exodus of refugees takes place along roads cluttered with corpses. The mutilated and the dead are laid out in a public square. Monroe is told that the film is fake; that the whole documentary is a fake and the soldiers were paid to “do a bit of acting.” Knowing something of their illicit methods, Monroe then sits down to analyze the subsequent jungle expedition footage, to be broadcast on BDC-TV as *The Green Inferno*. From here on, filmmakers Alan Yates, Faye Daniels, Jack Anders and Mark Tommaso are the real focus of *Cannibal Holocaust*, living through the newly discovered footage – shaky, scratched, unfocused, *cinema verité* style that it is.

Their film commences with the team about to board the plane that will take them to South America. They joke and fool around, (subtly establishing that there are two cameras on the expedition) and love nothing more than to turn the lens upon themselves.

Professor Monroe decides to speak to the kin of the dead team, but meets up with the general reply: They were no good. Back at the studio, he plays the next roll of film. For a few minutes without

sound, the film traces the team as they enter the jungle itself. Gradually, the sound returns. Two of the men pull from the river a huge turtle (the film pops and starts) and dismember it alive. The guide on the expedition, Felipe, prises the shell from the creature's back and pulls at the offal inside. Its feet continue to flap and the head, lying some feet away, continues to croak. (The actors can barely hide their very real revulsion at this point.)

Deeper in the jungle, Faye screams out. The team run to her aid with Alan insisting that the poisonous spider crawling up her arm be filmed before it is knocked to the ground. Later, Felipe is bitten on the foot by a snake. The venom is gouged out but the team demands that the leg be amputated anyway. The decision is premature and carried out with a relish that suggests the action to be nothing more than confection for the documentary in progress. Felipe dies.

The crew eventually reach a clearing where natives are hunting monkeys. Jack wounds one of the hunters so that they may tail him back to his village. The team enter the village of the Yacumo tribe. They shoot a piglet, while Alan declares that "things like this happen all the time in the jungle." They corral all the villagers into one hut and set it alight in order that their documentary will include atrocity footage meted out by 'warring tribes'. Many of the folk are burned alive. Curiously with this sequence, the soundtrack shifts from a sombre series of synth blips to the rather joyous main theme. After whooping madly at the scene, Alan and Faye make violent love. (Alan's reaction upon discovering that this scene has been captured on celluloid again seems most genuine . . . )

Professor Monroe voices his growing concern over the validity of this documentary, but is told by an associate of BDR that "Today people want sensationalism. The more you rape their senses, the happier they are." Monroe declares that the film should not be televised; that it is totally immoral and inhumane. "You haven't seen the stuff even your editors didn't have the stomach to put together," he tells the network.

The professor convinces the station executives they should at least sit through a private screening. In a darkened auditorium, the lights lower and the intrepid explorers flicker once again into life. They capture a young girl of the Tree People and the men take it in turns to rape her while Faye struggles to stop them. (The film pops and jumps.) The team come to a clearing where the figure of a



"The horror . . ." *Cannibal Holocaust*.

woman sits suspended several feet off the ground, impaled on a stake. The wooden shaft enters her body vagina first, and leaves through the mouth. Upon sight of the cruel punishment, a smiling Alan needs to be reminded that the camera is on him. He feigns sobriety, commenting on the horror . . . the unimaginable horror that stands before them. (The film pops and jumps.) The team realise they are being surrounded by the Tree People. They open fire on the fleeting figures, but Jack gets a spear in his belly. Faye screams as Alan shoots Jack dead. Mark's camera follows the Tree People as they drag the dead colleague into the undergrowth. The natives castrate the corpse and hack it in two, feeding on intestine, fighting over it, swinging it about. "Keep rolling," someone cries. "We're gonna get an Oscar for this!" The camera turns on the remaining members of the team. They run, but Faye is captured. Alan falls injured, screaming to Mark. But Mark cannot afford to stop filming to help, instead he turns his camera on Faye, who is raped and bludgeoned until dead. Here, too, the soundtrack alternates between sombre blipping and the buoyant main refrain. Faye's severed head is held aloft. Obsessively, Mark keeps hold of the camera even as he himself is being knocked to the ground. Flashes of the tools that will kill him.

He turns the camera on himself. The warriors pound the man's head into the ground. His bloodied, staring face . . .

The film ends. The auditorium is silent. A station executive tells the projectionist he wants this material burned. Monroe walks out onto the New York streets and ponders, "I wonder who the real cannibals are?"

The popular subgenre of movies that kicked off with Deodato's *Cannibal* [1976], followed by his own *Cannibal Holocaust* [1979], Umberto Lenzi's *Eaten Alive* [1979], Sergio Martino's *Prisoner of the Cannibal God* [1979], Lenzi's *Deep River Savages* [1981], and several other lesser incursions,<sup>1</sup> is one of those rare instances where an Italian cycle is not indebted to some Hollywood box office success. If anything it pays its dues to that other Italian cinematic tradition: the mondo film.

A heavy revulsion quota is an essential part of cannibal movies. They thrive on gruesomeness (animal mutilation and 'human' entrails are the key attributes). In Umberto Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* [1980], this viciousness reached a pinnacle with savages hacking the penis off one jungle explorer and devouring it before his eyes, while another scene had a female companion suspended by hooks through her breasts. Although *Cannibal Holocaust* does propagate its own share of bloody excess, it remains by far the most interesting, intelligent, and commanding of the cycle to date.

In *The Last Road To Hell*, one of the filmmaking team's earlier efforts, Deodato utilizes actual news footage. The atrocities meted out in this archive material are undeniably real, but Deodato muddies our perception of reality a little by having Professor Monroe discover the footage to be 'fake'.

It's all too easy for ferociousness to numb objectivity. If a turtle gets mutilated or a muskrat tortured and run through with a knife, or documentary footage shows men being shot dead, then the movie has already established a certain high frequency of viciousness. The audience cottons on fast and is racing ahead, preparing itself to expect the worse. This finely honed abhorrence increases the potency of all subsequent acts of violence ten-fold. *Cannibal Holocaust* manages to anaesthetize rational thought with the shock of real live things being killed: *If this is real, what else might be real?*

As seen in *Emanuelle in America*, shaky hand-held camerawork



'The Last Road to Hell'.

commands a certain realism, and the ill-fated team's film-within-a-film here – *The Green Inferno* – is no exception. With its *verité* style, and the constant physical and verbal references to the camera by the documenters, *The Green Inferno* doesn't look like a 'real movie', not like *Cannibal Holocaust*, say. So arises the implication: real filmmakers, real cannibals, real *murder*. The French magazine, *Photo* [January 1981], was concerned enough in a piece entitled 'Grand Guignol Cannibale' to present the movie more as a snuff film than a feature film. As a result, word of mouth for several weeks had it that *Cannibal Holocaust* was "the one in which men where really dismembered, beheaded, castrated and *mangiati vivi!*" And the movie was a huge success.<sup>2</sup> In Italy, four weeks after it opened on 8 February 1980, *Cannibal Holocaust* was confiscated and declared obscene by the high court; the unearthing of an old law forbidding the torture of animals helped to get it banned outright. (Deodato fought the decision and, in 1983, in its entirety, the movie was released back into Italian theatres.) Banned in Britain on video, a copy of *Cannibal Holocaust* confiscated in Birmingham in April of 1993, prompted further declarations of "snuff" [see chapter 8].

It doesn't seem to matter that a wavering tree branch or the ever reliable pop, start or film hiccup should occur always at the most technically advantageous moment – that is, when Faye's head is about to be lifted from her shoulders or Jack is about to have his chest split asunder by the savages. Indeed, it could be that this very instability gives the *Green Inferno* film its authentic quality. At the end of the movie, when the BDC-TV executive gives instructions for the film to be destroyed, a closing note informs the viewer that the projectionist received a two-month suspended sentence and was fined \$10,000 for illegal appropriation of film material. When the movie opens, it is to a panorama of the Amazon rainforest and an enormously haunting score by Riz Ortolani. A note there reads: 'For the sake of authenticity some sequences have been retained in their entirety'. Which, of course, means nothing at all. Deodato should be applauded. *Cannibal Holocaust* really does prove that you can fool some of the people all of the time.

"Country of origin?"

"Ah . . . presuming 53 seconds represents the period of delay, I'd say somewhere in . . . Malaysia?"

In the workshop, electronic whiz-kid Harlan monitors a satellite broadcast for Civic-TV director Max Renn. The television screen flickers into life with the pirate image: one room; two hooded men push a girl to a wall; she moans, blubbers; they grab a whip, pull the girl to one side and – the fuzzy image gives out; the broadcast has been scrambled. Renn tells Harlan to put a track on it.

Later, Harlan locks into the broadcast once again. The same room facing the same wall, this time a man is suspended by his hands. Two hooded figures flog him simultaneously.

"When does the . . . er . . . plot start to unravel here?" asks Renn.

"It just goes on like that for an hour," replies Harlan.

"Goes on like what?"

"Goes on like *that*. Torture . . . murder . . . mutilation . . ."

"We never leave that room? . . . It's absolutely brilliant. Look, there's almost no production costs . . . You can't take your eyes off it. It's incredibly realistic. *Where do they get actors that can do this?*"

Renn, always in search of sex-and-violence to boost his cable station ratings, figures he has to check the programme out – indeed

more so when Harlan tells him that the signal is being transmitted not from the Far East, but Pittsburgh. USA.

In David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* [1982], once again film-within-film is used to blur fact from fiction. However, whereas the aim of *Cannibal Holocaust* was to feign reality, *Videodrome* disassembles perception to create a world of fantasy.

*Videodrome* opens to static, the title rolling from side to side as if the tracking on a VCR is slightly askew. Tuned in, we are introduced to Max Renn (James Woods) via his video wake-up call, who in turn is introduced to 'Videodrome', the broadcast that Harlan is monitoring in his workshop.

Renn speaks to various contacts in order that he may discover more about Videodrome, despite a warning that Videodrome is dangerous. A girl he spends the night with, Nicki Brand (Deborah Harry), is so excited over a pirate tape of the broadcast that she decides to go to Pittsburgh to audition for the show. Renn begins to hallucinate. The hallucinations become so that fantasy and reality are indistinguishable.

Renn imagines he is flogging Nicki on the Videodrome 'set' – or, at least, flogging her image on a TV screen. Later, he is told that

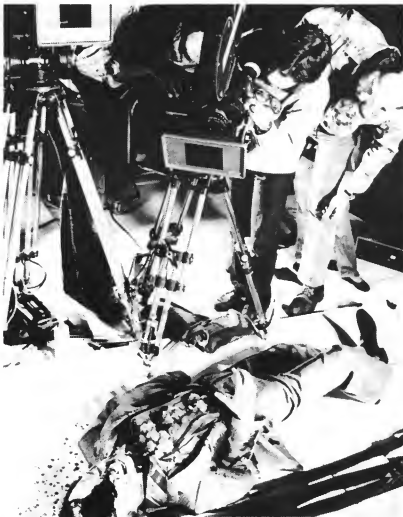


Max Renn sees snuff TV for the first time. *Videodrome*.



Nicki is already dead – Videodrome killed her and has been using her image to seduce him.

Craig Ledbetter wrote in *European Trash Cinema* [Vol.2 #1] of a rumour that Cronenberg, after seeing *Emanuelle in America* – “more specifically the ‘snuff’ footage” – was inspired to make *Videodrome*. The movie is a crosswire of shockmanship and assertion; prodding at issues such as exposure to violence on television, media manipulation



Behind-the-scenes. *Videodrome*.

and control, and effects of pornography (of which Max and Nicki are but victims). Unquestionably one of Cronenberg's most compelling ventures, *Videodrome* does tend to flip itself on its back once the mysterious media guru Brian O'Blivion makes his appearance and the Videodrome philosophy cranks up: "TV is the extension of the tactile sense. . . The television screen has become the retina of the mind's eye." On top of this comes the increasingly fractured narrative, as Videodrome (the broadcast) becomes one with *Videodrome* (the movie).

Even within context of "your reality is already half video hallucination," it is still difficult to fully appreciate Harlan pulling his hand from a cunt-like slit in Renn's belly, and finding it has been replaced by a grenade which blows him up and puts a hole in the wall. Or, indeed, the closing anthem of "Long Live The New Flesh" – the *what it all means* – as Max Renn becomes a TV set.

On the other hand, such convolutions would suggest that an awfully roundabout route be necessary to examine the premise: "What you see on that show is for real. . . It's not acting. It's snuff TV."

Interviewed in *Cinéfantastique* [vol. 12 #2/3], Cronenberg likened his movie to Sidney Lumet's *Network* [1976]. The two, he said, were similar in that they weren't specifically an attack on TV. *Videodrome's* Media Guru Brian O'Blivion and *Network's* Mad Prophet of the Airwaves, Howard Beale, would suggest a deeper analogy however.

Critic Richard Eder included *Network* in a round-up of recent movies that glorified the anti-hero [*New York Times*, January 1977].

After a fall in ratings, news anchorman Howard Beale (Peter Finch) is given his notice by the UBS television network. In a following broadcast, Beale puts aside his script and publicly announces that he will kill himself. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do," he says. "I'm going to blow my brains out right on this programme a week from today." He persuades the station to allow him back on the air to make amends in a subsequent broadcast. Begrudgingly they agree. But Beale again detours from the script to denounce the lies and hypocrisies perpetuated by the media. The station fire him. However, programming executive Diana Christenson (Faye Dunaway) convinces the UBS director of Beale's appeal to the angry and frustrated populace, and that he is a potential goldmine.

Christenson's last brainwave resulted in the *Mao Tse Tung Hour*, a weekly drama series based around footage of terrorist acts. She now sees to it that the Mad Prophet of the Airways himself, Howard Beale, gets to wax wrath in *The Network News Hour* – a news show that opens to the catchphrase "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take this any more!" Bereft of desk and script altogether, in a black suit Beale stands before a huge stained glass window. A shaft of light from above illuminates the solitary figure.

"There is a whole and entire generation right now who never knew anything that didn't come out of this tube! This tube is the gospel! This tube is the ultimate revelation! . . ." Beale's ad libbed rants grow ever-fervent until finally, at the end of each performance, he collapses. The studio audience go wild. The viewing figures are astronomical.

Arthur Jensen, manager of the corporation that owns the network, manages to convince Beale of his true vocation – preaching the new gospel of a corporate utopia. *The Network News Hour* ratings begin to plummet. So fast, in fact, that Beale has to be taken off the air. But Jensen will hear none of it and the prophet stays. Christenson has an idea. . . In the audience of a subsequent *Network News Hour*, two members of the Ecumenical Liberation Front take their seats. As the show opens, the ELF men open fire and Beale drops to the floor, dead. The image, captured by the several studio cameras, is played over and over on a bank of monitors. The recording will provide the basis for another episode of *The Mao Tse Tung Hour*.

Beale's madness and vitriolic outbursts are the highlights of *Network*, and his monologues genuinely funny, poignant; mesmerizing. While he is still an anchorman on the regular news format programme, with seconds to spare before the next broadcast, mumbling incoherently, Beale charges out from the rain into the studio and in his sodden overcoat sits down at his desk. "Television is a goddamn amusement park!" he roars into the camera. "We'll tell you any shit you want to hear!" Later, in public, in the grandiose office grounds of Arthur Jensen, he falls to his knees in reverence; bellowing.

In the opening of the picture, when Beale is told by his colleague and old friend Max Schumacher (William Holden) that UBS-TV have fired him, effective in two weeks, the couple go out and get appropriately drunk. In his stupor, Beale tells Schumacher that he is



Howard Beale. *Network*.

going to kill himself on air.

"You'll get a hell of a rating," replies Schumacher. "We could make a series out of it. 'Suicide of the Week.' Hell, why limit ourselves? 'Execution of the Week' . . ."

"Terrorist of the week," slurs Beale.

"I love it! Suicides. Executions. Mad bombers. Mafia hitmen. Automobile smash-ups. 'The Death Hour.' A great Sunday night show for the whole family! We'll wipe fuckin' Disney right off the air."

Beale is already asleep.

Although it doesn't actually appear in the movie, in Sam Hedrin's novelization of Paddy Chayefsky's original screenplay, Beale makes an interesting reference in his drunken dialogue with Schumacher. Beale tells him, "I'm going to blow my brains out right on the air, right in the middle of the seven o'clock news, *like that girl in Florida a couple of months ago*." The reference is to Chris Chubbuck who, on 15 July 1974, shot herself in the head during her talk show on WXLTV [see chapter 7].

*After Emanuelle in America, Last House on Dead End Street and*

*Hardcore* in the 1970s, rarely was snuff simply seen as a few dog-eared rolls of film playing on a projector somewhere, frightening in its anonymity. As illustrated in the last chapter, these three films helped to establish a history of snuff, what snuff was, what it looked like and where it came from. It wasn't necessary to reiterate this. Movies would come to tackle snuff in a different way – a means toward winning an award for an unscrupulous crew of documentary filmmakers, for instance, or a TV broadcast towards a new flesh. But always, live death on celluloid remained an intriguing and shocking plot device. Indeed, Peter Hyam's need do no more than allude to it in his *The Star Chamber* [1983].

Perhaps more than snuff film, of interest in the 1980s was the snuff filmmaker. The likes of *Special Effects*, *Der Todesking*, and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, all endeavour to dissect the nefarious celluloid activities of lone individuals. For others such as *Contra Conspiracy* and *Past Midnight*, snuff was altogether superficial to the story, a mere prop. In *Live! From Death Row*, it was a matter for debate. Certainly, by the 1990s, the aberration didn't seem quite so isolated anymore with *Thrill Kill Video Club* and *Man Bites Dog* going so far as to make snuff a focus for satire.

In this chapter, we shall look at these films and others: a decade of snuff in the movies. Here stands a world encrusted by criminal obsessives and that 'Truly Great Shot' – not so much those who deem it worth dying for, but those for whom someone else can die.

Larry Cohen's *Special Effects* [1984] sees a film director inadvertently murdering a girl on camera. Chris Neville (Eric Bogosian) makes front page news after his 35 million dollar special effects extravaganza takes a belly-flop at the box office. It seems that everyone in town is laughing about it. Except hooker and aspiring actress Andrea (Zoe Tamarlis) who presses Neville for a part in his next picture. He coaxes her into bed, but she gets wise to the director's penchant for filming his conquests from behind one-way mirrors and ridicules him on his latest bomb. "You're losin' it!" she taunts. He strangles her, dumps the body, and puts the blame on Keefe, the girl's husband. Neville decides to make use of the snuff footage and, documenting Keefe's arrest, plans the blockbuster he so desperately needs.

Putting up bail for Keefe and getting the detective on the case to



Andrea. *Special Effects*.

work as associate producer, Neville holds all the cards. He manipulates real-life around him, implying to the detective via his movie-in-progress that Keefe *is* the murderer. He turns the camera on Keefe behind-the-scenes more than he does on the actor playing Keefe's part. What's more, Elaine, the actress playing the murdered girl (Tamarlis again), is starting to lose her own identity.

When Keefe inadvertently burns out the actual snuff reel that Neville intends will open his movie, the director invites Elaine back to his place for a reshoot.

Hailed in some quarters as an auteur filmmaker, following on from the likes of *It's Alive* [1974], *Demon* [1977], and *Q The Winged Serpent* [1981], *Special Effects* is possibly Larry Cohen's most accessible movie. All of his work sports some incredible, provocative premise, but this is one instance where Cohen is able to complete the movie without its incredible persuasion overtaking him . . . and the viewer.

In *Special Effects*, Chris Neville cites his inspiration for getting into movie making as "JFK." When Andrea firsts shows up at the



Another victim of Chris Neville. *Special Effects*.

director's home, Neville is watching the familiar b&w news footage of Jack Ruby gunning down Lee Harvey Oswald.

"What makes it real?" Neville asks.

"Because I know it happened," the girl replies.

"Would you know if you hadn't seen it on the news?"

"Nobody could fake *that*."

"What makes it *different*." Neville presses. "What if there's *no*

difference: real death/make-believe death?"

Later in the movie, this fascination will lead Neville to announce of his own feature-in-progress: the "idea is to make it real . . . as totally real as I can get it." The ultimate irony being, of course, that by the very nature of the medium, Neville will be "taking reality and making it look like a special effect."

In John Frankenheimer's *52 Pick-Up* [1986], wealthy businessman Harry Mitchell (Roy Scheider) finds that his one brief affair, during 22 years of marriage, has landed him with a blackmail suit to the tune of 52,000 dollars. Meeting Cini, the nude model from a Detroit porno house, wasn't an accident after all and now an unscrupulous gang threaten to show the photographs to Harry's wife (Ann-Margret) if he doesn't cough up. He doesn't, and tells his wife himself anyway. But the gang refuse to let up and, in an attempt to extort an even larger amount of money, murder Cini, film the killing, and threaten to lay the blame on Mitchell.

In a darkened warehouse, Mitchell is forced to sit and watch the snuff footage. One of the gang members provides a commentary and their demands. "It's a kinda low budget production," he says as on-screen the terrified girl is roped into a chair. The film is silent and in colour. "She's pretty isn't she?" Mitchell is told how his own automatic with his prints still all over it is being used. There's Mitchell's sports jacket, too, with a name tag inside. A wooden board is tied to the girl. Five shots from the gun blister the wood. The girl slumps.

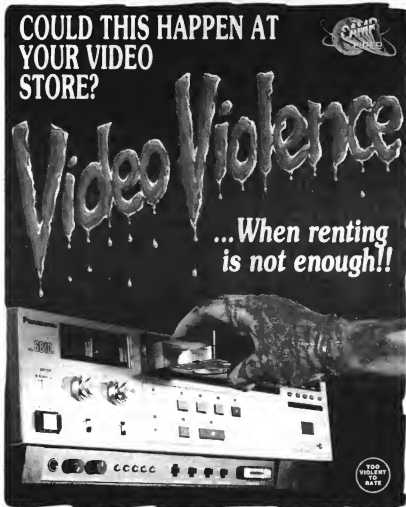
Following the rather tepid *52 Pick-Up* (which neglects to explain the purpose of the wooden board), a total of four movies touched on elements of snuff between 1986 and 87. Of these, three are extremely low budget direct-to-video affairs. The advancement of video technology proves not only a means of manufacture and distribution for these pictures, but – in documenting murder – a handier, more accessible alternative to the cine camera.

The ad artwork, and the Church of the SubGenius approval, ought to be some indication of what to expect of *Video Violence. . . When Renting is not Enough!* [1986/7]. Camp Video – also responsible for *Gore-met Zombie Chef from Hell* and having the distinction of releasing more Ray Dennis Steckler movies than any



other label – would spur the understanding that this is a trash movie. It's actually an intense – if flawed – chiller.

Directed by Gary Cohen, *Video Violence* opens to a small country town and a murder at a clothes store. A woman, trying on a pair of jeans, is bludgeoned to death by one of the staff while another stands filming. The scene shifts then to that of Steve Emory, the out-of-towner who has recently opened a video rental library nearby. Everyone who steps into the shop is unfriendly and only ever enquiring after gory horror movies. When an unmarked tape is left in the night drop, Steve gets an inkling just how unfriendly the folk



A 'must see' for video store personnel & their customers!

really are round these parts: a homemade movie depicting the murder of the town's postmaster has inadvertently been dropped off.

When or why the town should have flipped out is never explained, nor why the townsfolk should find real death an essential staple to its viewing diet. But, like a bloody, estranged remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, both Emory and our mystification only serve to accentuate the overall insanity. When Emory notifies the police of his suspicions, it goes without saying that the damning unmarked tape and his video store co-worker should have mysteriously disappeared.

Also direct to video is *Video Murders* [1987], written and directed by Jim McCullough, Jr. – the man responsible for *Mountaintop Motel Massacre* [1983]. Here, a pained mama's boy (Eric Brown) strangles women while recording the proceedings with a video camera for his later delectation. For the most part, the movie covers the second potential victim, the hostage situation that ensues, and the efforts of the police detective on the case to find the couple before it's too late. L.A. Morse writes in *Video Trash & Treasures*, "Unfortunately, the psycho, the victim, and the cop are so bland, dumb and boring that it's impossible to work up interest in any of them, nor do several lengthy chase sequences do much to enliven the tedium."

Brian Davies utilizes a snuff theme in *Shock Ending* [1987]. Colin (Paul Roberts), a young man with an insatiable appetite for horror movies, goes berserk when his wife, Barbara (Gwenno Hodgkins), nags him for idling in front of the video yet again and tears from the wall his beloved film posters. He lunges at the woman, grabbing her by the throat. In the scuffle, the video recorder is inadvertently knocked into Record mode, triggering the video camera that sits nearby.

Davies' films tend to be no-budget romps with neighbours and friends playing all the roles; the same faces can be spotted in *The Vacancy* [1985], *The Exhumation* [1986], and, at 42 minutes, Davies' magnum opus, *Last Day at the Beach* [1990]. This might sound a recipe for disaster and it often is – with monochromatic facial expressions delivering wooden dialogue – but there is a certain shrug of the shoulders about the whole thing that impresses, and a few adventurous twists to be had in *Shock Ending*.

Still in 1987, though with a substantially greater budget, is Marek Kanievska's *Less Than Zero*, the less than compelling story of Beverly Hills rich kids and the miserable lives they lead. It loosely follows the misfortunes of three friends: Julian (Robert Downey, Jr.), whose habit drags him into debt and prostitution, Clay (Andrew McCarthy), who wants to help but doesn't know how, and Blair (Jami Gertz), girlfriend, it seems, to the other two.

Based on the stark novel of the same name by Bret Easton Ellis, Kanievska has diluted the more threatening and disturbing elements and come up with, not a diluted version of the book, but an even more pointless existence for those characters in it. Kanievska gives little reason why Julian, Clay and Blair should want to be leading such fast lives – the excesses are no longer worth it.

Towards the end of the movie, Clay and Blair move through yet another obnoxious Beverly Hills party in search of their spaced-out buddy Julian. The two stop in front of a bank of TV screens and cringe in disbelief at whatever's playing before continuing their search. The sequence makes no sense. Other than the flickering image of the TV sets, the audience never sees what causes our two 'heroes' to react so. Nor does anyone refer to the incident later. Julian is eventually found, stoned. Dies. *What was on those screens?*

Ellis' original story told that a party at a beach house screened a snuff film, sending Clay deeper into disparity. It showed a young girl, nude, maybe 15, tied spreadeagle to a bed. She's lying on what looks like newspaper. "The film's in black and white and scratchy... The camera cuts quickly to a young, thin, nude, scared-looking boy, sixteen, maybe seventeen, being pushed into the room by this fat black guy, who's also naked and who's got this huge hard-on. The boy stares into the camera for an uncomfortably long time, this panicked expression on his face." In the novel, Clay wonders why there's a chainsaw in the corner of the room. Then the black guy has sex with the boy, and sex with the girl. He wanders off screen; comes back carrying a toolbox. Clay leaves the room as the guy tries to push a nail into the girl's neck.

A projector plays several reels of Super-8 film. The first seems to be a test. The second shows a girl aligning the camera on herself before commencing to read passages from a book – a text on thrill killers. The third reel shows the same girl posing in front of a mirror with a

second camera strapped to her shoulder and a gun in her hand. She points the revolver at a mirror and the camera filming her. Another reel of film, but from the silent point-of-view of the shoulder camera: a dark corridor leading to a desk and a cashier. A gun is lifted into shot and the cashier backs off. The pistol is fired and the man topples. The camera continues its flight into a projection booth. It



*Der Todesking.*

seems a cinema has been turned into a make-shift concert arena. Looking out from the booth, a stage with a band playing can be seen. A crowd watches the show. The hands behind the roving camera set a second camera rolling in the projection booth. The POV switches to that of the projection booth camera. We see the girl with the shoulder camera walking up to the stage and shooting dead several band members. She then turns the gun on the audience, firing randomly. Someone else pulls a gun. The POV of the girl shows the shot that will kill her.

The above scenario is taken from Jörg Buttgerreit's *Der Todesking* [1989], a movie divided into several episodes – each a day of the week – and unrelated outside of the central theme: suicide. On Monday, a man arrives home from work, gets into the bath and takes an overdose of pills. Tuesday, a man watching a violent horror film shoots his wife – itself a sequence playing on a TV set in a room where a body hangs from a noose. Wednesday, a troubled girl finds herself next to a troubled man on a park bench. He shoots himself with the gun she offers. Thursday, a bridge; persons who have committed suicide jumping from the bridge are named. Friday, a spinster spies on a couple of young lovers from her apartment window. The lovers are so happy they kill themselves. Sunday, a man rises from his bed and proceeds to bang his head against the wall until dead. The girl with the film camera is Saturday. Buttgerreit says of Saturday, “This episode is based on several true crime incidents. Like Charles Whitman climbing on top of a building, shooting all these students and being aware of the fact that he can’t get away with it because he’s trapped himself on the roof. It’s a kind of suicide. She’s committing suicide as opposed to just killing other people. She wants to be sure that people know about it. She wants to be recognized.”

One killer who most assuredly does not want to be recognized is Henry in John McNaughton's bleak *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* [1989]. Henry is on his way “out west,” nowhere in particular, a trail of murder in his wake. The movie opens to the grim police-photo-like images of discarded murder victims. One sits lacerated and naked in an open field, another has a broken bottle stuffed into its mouth, another lies face down at a river's edge. Henry pays his bill at a diner, tells the waitress, “That’s a real nice smile you’ve got there”

and leaves. The epitome of manners and courtesy. He then drives to a supermarket and cases the car park for a potential victim. When nothing turns up, he turns to the highway and offers a hitch hiker a lift to the city. Fade to black.

Henry is rooming in Chicago with his buddy Otis [sic]. Otis' sister, Becky, comes to stay for a short while. The slow-witted Otis constantly picks on her. "Whut else can y'do besides dance nekkid," he laughs when Becky says she's going to get a job in the city. When Otis makes a pass at Becky, an outraged Henry gets him to apologize. The two men go out for a beer and pick up a couple of hookers. Parked in a sidestreet, Henry suddenly snaps both of the girls' necks. Otis stares in disbelief. "Whut's gonna happen when they find them bodies?" he says.

"Nuthin'."

Henry introduces Otis to the ways of serial killing. "It's always the same. . . and it's always different."

When their TV set blows out, Henry and Otis go to a backstreet warehouse shopping for a new one. Despite their apologies for having wasted the salesman's time, the fat guy continues hollering on hearing that the men have only got \$50 between them. They kill him, taking the most expensive set in the place and a camcorder.

A curiously up-beat sequence: Otis gives the camcorder a trial run by filming Becky and Henry fooling around to The Sonics' *Psycho*.

In a suburban frontroom somewhere, from the POV of the camcorder, Otis can be seen struggling with a screaming woman. The camera swings to the floor where a bound and gagged man lies kicking. Henry's foot from behind the lens sweeps into the man's belly. Otis is laughing his dumb laugh as the screaming woman tries desperately to pull away. A door opens and into shot walks a teenaged boy who immediately turns to run. The camera goes down and, from its half-cocked angle on the floor where everything is happening on its side, Henry runs into shot, grabs the boy and breaks his neck. He pulls a knife and kills the bound man. Otis laughs and calls for Henry to watch, twisting the woman's neck until that too snaps. Henry returns to the camera and swings it back into the air. He focuses on Otis who is orchestrating the dead woman's arms so that it looks like she is waving to the camera. "Hello!" Otis calls in a squeaky voice, then pulls the woman's shirt off and sucks at a breast.



When he mauls the crotch and begins to tear her tights away, Henry decides it's time to leave. The preceding events are being played to Otis and Henry in their apartment, courtesy of their new video. When the film comes to its end, Otis fumbles at the remote.

"What're you doin'?" says Henry.

"I wanna see it again," replies Otis, flicking the tape into slow motion.

Becky is set to return back home to her daughter. She asks Henry if he would come along with her. Henry says he has to think about it and invites Becky out for a steak meal (he has a new credit card he wants to try). When the couple later return, Otis is asleep in front of the TV, the murder tape playing again on the screen. Come the morning both Becky and Otis will be dead, and Henry will be moving on.

*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* was landed with a dreaded X-rating by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) in the States. In Britain, after much deliberation by the BBFC, it was released theatrically with 62 seconds of cuts and, more recently, onto video with a further 51sec cut.<sup>3</sup> With very little actual blood shed, a point of contention for the movie is its sombre atmosphere.<sup>4</sup> On top of this, however, is the snuff footage.

There is something awful about the camcorder episode, something beyond the scope of Otis and Henry's degradation and

murder of the nuclear family. In painting its portrait, if *Henry* refuses to stop and put its finger on the impulse that drives these men, it is because their actions are driven by an emptiness of spirit that extends no further than sitting half-bored, half-bewildered in front of their own image on a TV screen. When Otis explains that he's rewinding the video to watch the murder film again, not even Henry can figure it out. Tom Towles – who plays Otis – has said of the TV sequence, “That bit goes back to the basic tenet that less is more. We just had to sit there and watch the tape.”

Given that director McNaughton has openly dismissed any close parallels with real life, and that an opening blurb in the movie stipulates ‘The film is fictional’, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* does belie certain similarities to the real-life murderer Henry Lee Lucas – if not his life, then on popular conception of what Henry Lee Lucas is: confessor to 360 murders and, in his own words, “the world’s most worst mass murderer.”<sup>5</sup>

In an interview for *Film Threat Video Guide*, from his prison cell, Lucas admitted to not having seen McNaughton’s movie.

GREG GEISLER: What did you hear?

HENRY LEE LUCAS: That it portrays a serial killer, which I know I’m not, and the people involved . . . I don’t think people should be out there seeing that kind of trash. As far as I’m concerned.

GG: There’s (another) scene where Henry is videotaping ‘Otis’ killing someone.

HLL: I don’t know anything about that.

GG: It’s just made up?

HLL: They tried to make it up on confessions that I gave them, but as far as I’m concerned, there’s nothing in that film showing anything I ever did.

Robert Prichard says of his *Thrill Kill Video Club* [1991]: “The budget was about \$3,000. There was no script. I wrote a scenario and a story outline that was broken down into scenes. The actors improvised 98 percent of the dialogue, the other two percent I wrote in as camera edit cues. We shot for the cut, and principle photography was completed in one day. Editing required two days.”

It’s the story of Charles, Henry and Alicyn, three bored serial killers who happen to be browsing the shelves of Kim’s Video, East



Village, NYC. As Ted, the clerk at Kim's, is returning the tape *Surf Reality Presents How To Shoot a Snuff Film* to its rightful place in the 'How-To' section, the three killers move in. It transpires that Ted is a serial killer too. With this common interest, the Thrill Kill Video Club is born.

Playing 'Spin the Revolver', Alicyn is selected to troll for the first victim. The others prepare their studio by installing a hidden camera and, not wanting to make a mess, covering the floor and walls with plastic sheeting. Alicyn returns with some guy thinking he's in for an afternoon of steaming passion. Instead, Alicyn dispatches him begging and pleading for his life, as Charles records the whole thing on video. On a huge TV screen, the video is played back and the killers comment on the sobbing pathetic attitude of the victim. They are dissatisfied; he was a wimp and it was too easy. They decide to hold auditions for their next project and place an ad in *Backstage*, an industry newspaper.

Of the auditions, Steve Pulchalski comments in his review for *Shock Cinema*, "we're privy to the absolute WORST line-up of two-bit artistes that you've ever WANTED to see savagely killed, including pathetic comedians, dog acts, spoon players, performance artists, political orators, and the most hilarious interpretation of *Delilah* I've ever seen!" The spoon-player is Sylvester McCoy, BBC television's most recent Dr Who.



*Thrill Kill Video Club.*

The tables are finally turned on the protagonists when Sexy Lizzie shows up for an audition. The three males buffet one another in competition for Lizzie's affection, culminating in a bloodbath and all the guys dead. Lizzie then slays Alicyn with a hatpin. She calmly surveys the preceding carnage with the Club's own video camera. The phone rings. A voice on the line requests an audition. "Sure," says Lizzie. "Come on up." Cue the Pitney-esque theme song and roll the credits.

Although the dialogue improvisation by the cast is often more than obvious, it doesn't once get in the way of the movie. If anything, the improvisal quality adds to the whole pace, giving *Thrill Kill Video Club* a sense of urgency. Even more, it gives the thing a wayward lunacy in that the cast appear to be as much in the dark as the viewer as to what comes next. If *Thrill Kill Video Club* was played less for laughs, this fragility and desperation would be frighteningly potent. As it is, the movie is a comedy and a funny one at that.

Snuff becomes a curious bolster to Jan Eliasberg's *Past Midnight* [1991], a whodunnit whose damning evidence consists of a roll of Super-8 film. Rutger Hauer plays Ben Jordan, recently released from prison. Laura Mathews (Natasha Richardson), parole officer, falls for the blue-eyed, often blitzed-looking Jordan when she begins to uncover yawning discrepancies in his conviction. Maybe he didn't stab his wife to death after all. But whenever reproached about his past, Jordan affirms everyone else's suspicions by asking, "Do *you* believe I did it?" With this, *Past Midnight* becomes a volley between Laura's love for the obviously innocent man and a constant unearthing of new evidence that would suggest he be the murderer after all.

When Laura probes deeper into the case, a police officer shows her silent, black & white Super-8 footage Jordan is supposed to have shot. In it, Mrs Jordan is laughing and joking with the (unseen) cameraman. She holds up a beer. Panic on her face as the cameraman's knife-wielding hand comes into view. The film ends before the actual stabbing. The police officer tells Laura that the killer ran out of film.

In his defence, Laura asks herself how a heavily drunken man could have seen straight enough, long enough, to stab anyone in the heart 36 times? Or, why the victim should be so happy to see her

husband roll in stone drunk, even offering him another beer? Or, why the killer should make the film at all?

Red herrings abound. Mixing matters up a little more, Laura even gets pregnant by Jordan. As for who actually dunnit, everyone is excused for not guessing the identity of the real killer before he pops out of the woodwork several minutes from the end credits. In a twist that borders on the criminal, the killer is revealed to be *Tod? Ted? Toady?* – a story nobody from way back. Cornering Laura, the killer explains himself. He screens for her the snuff footage of Mrs Jordan, only his print doesn't end suddenly; it continues with the knife being plunged into the woman again and again. Several other, unidentified, women fill the screen. More murders. He tells the pregnant Laura how the victims "all had these. . . big round bellies. I'm not a sex maniac. I'm not some Son of Sam asshole, I don't hear voices. . . It's not like I have to k-k-kill someone every week." Upon which Jordan arrives to save the day.

Maybe it would've been better if the killer *did* hear voices, then at least it would lend some credibility to what it was he was trying to say. Questions not only go unanswered in this superficial ending, but several new ones are raised; for instance, what possesses the killer to take the trouble to film his victims? Why and how does he come to have a separate, different print of the Mrs Jordan killing to the one in police custody? Why does this other print not 'run out of film' too?

Much searching of the soul and yanking of the heart is the order of the day for Patrick Duncan's *Live! From Death Row* [1991], a made-for-TV movie. Amidst protestations and "Fry 'Em" T-shirts, Alana Powers (Joanna Cassidy) takes her 'Live!' TV crew onto Death Row for an exclusive transmission – she has secured an interview with serial killer Lawrence Dvorak (Bruce Davison). Joel (Jason Tomlins), the disgruntled cameraman, complains that 'Live!' used to be a news show but now is a circus. What's more, he blames a fall in ratings on the fact that Powers has become desensitized to the horrors she reports on.

On air, Powers tells the viewers that the show is to feature the condemned Dvorak's last hours on earth, before cutting for a commercial break. "Maybe that'll keep their sweaty little hands off the remote control," she says to herself. Dvorak is seen to be charming, erudite, humorous and harbouring no apparent desire for a

last minute reprieve. "Unlike Theodore Bundy," he tells Powers, "no more hidden bodies." He then overpowers one of the guards and snatches a revolver, unlocks the other five inmates and seals all exits. The network keeps the broadcast on the air; whenever Dvorak tells Joel to quit filming, the station plays interviews with kin. "Tonight someone will die," Dvorak explains to the camera before engaging in rhetoric on the death penalty and morality. He demands that Powers interview everyone on the Row in turn. One con, a Vietnam veteran, tells Powers the "United States government taught me how to kill, but they never untaught me."

*Live! From Death Row* is a melodrama, seemingly obliged to hang an ethical issue on every line that is uttered. Not only does Dvorak oppose capital punishment, but there's also Sheehan, the guard, who doesn't have an opinion either way; Kenny, the frightened con who can't stand it anymore; Lockart, the black man who thinks it's a racist thing, man.

Like an episode of the *Twilight Zone*, a moral equilibrium is reached by the end of the film: Dvorak with a gun is exactly the authoritarian he opposes; Joel puts down his camera and refuses to film a suicide; Alana Powers sees the error of her exploitative reporting ways and breaks down and cries. Frightened for her life, one of the guards tries to convince her children watching, "Kids. . . this isn't real, it's a TV show."

No doubt evoking the finger-waving self-righteous manner of such investigative TV as *The Geraldo Rivera Show* (one episode of which was 'Murder: Live From Death Row'), director Duncan's contemplation and resolution of every serious issue in the book, likewise has the adverse effect of being overbearing and shallow.

Would-be actors and actresses are being murdered in Hollywood. Jack is a tough, hard-hitting cop with a heart of gold. His girlfriend, Holly, is abducted and Jack has to get her back, even though he's officially suspended from the force. Wings Hauser's directorial debut, *The Art of Dying* [1991], is a rather luke warm thriller. Hauser – frightening as the pimp in *Vice Squad* [1982] – plays Jack, out to nail Latin Jerry (Mitch Hara) who he thinks is behind a series of murders. He's part-right. Latin Jerry is working for Francis (Gary Werntz), a man making a feature length snuff movie.

A Hollywood hopeful sits at a table. The set around him is

minimalist; that of the interior of a wooden shack. He has a headband on and a revolver in his hand. Latin Jerry watches. Francis, behind the camera, calls for another take. He's not satisfied with the boy's performance, and the scene begins again. The boy pulls the gun to his head, delivering his lines. Still not right. Latin Jerry starts slapping the boy across the face, over and over. The boy is incensed, seething. That's it! calls the cameraman. Action! The camera rolling. The boy screams and pushes the gun to his head, then slams it into his mouth and pulls the trigger. It blows his brains out. POV of the camera: black & white it watches the boy in his death throes, coughing on blood. Francis whispers, "That's the way it should have been shot originally."

Francis is re-enacting great demises of the screen, but for real. He attempts to kill off aspiring stars in the manner of *The Deer Hunter*, the shower scene from *Psycho* and the burning at the stake of *Joan of Arc*. In one of his reproductions, *Scarface*, two men are strung up in a bathroom set and diced (there is a cut at this point in the UK print). After the deed, he pronounces, "Beyond Pacino." In another sequence, again with the camera rolling, he explains to an attentive young man the element of surprise a director might hold over the audience. Suddenly he pins the man's hand to the table with a knife while Latin Jerry strangles him from behind.

Of course, Jack saves the girl and gets his man in the end.

For a few moments Tom Dewier's *Contra Conspiracy* [199-] looks to be a TV remake of *Cannibal Holocaust* (later it becomes *FX* and *Mad Max 2*). It concerns a group of filmmakers on location in the desert whose only legacy is the footage they made. In a private screening room, a government official explains that this is the last of the footage to be recovered and is silent: a hand-held camera wanders playfully around the desert camp; a girl waves the cameraman away but he persists in filming. A jeep rolls up and men in combat fatigues open fire. The cameraman records the deaths of those around him. He focuses on the dead at his feet. When he lifts his camera again, one of the soldiers has a gun pointed at him. The screen goes blank. A young girl, the only survivor of the shooting, is brought in for questioning by the three officials. Her flashbacks fill in the story.

In the opening half, *Contra Conspiracy* plods – achingly obvious – through the lives and relationships of the film crew. Then it plods

some more when a group of soldier-types warn the crew that they are on "government property" and have to leave. They don't, bringing the story to a replay of the shooting (but with different camera angles). The girl and a few others manage to escape the carnage and the hunt is on.

From here on, it's a case of the film crew attempting to outwit the assassins on their tail, their only weapons a bag of special effects. It all has something to do with a prospective drugs transaction and a governmental hush-up. A few unpleasanties worth mentioning: A sadistic colonel, back at base, orders an injured man to be shot, licking his lips as he listens to the pleadings over his walkie-talkie; there are no end credits, instead a freeze frame of several minutes that suggests there ought to be some.

An influx of hard-hitting action movies converged on British cinemas in the opening months of 1993. These were Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* [USA, 1992], Bertrand Tavernier's *L.627* [France, 1992] and *Man Bites Dog* [Belgium, 1992]. The press touted the movies as being some kind of new direction in on-screen violence.

*Man Bites Dog* is a student project, a joint affair directed by Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel and Benoît Poelvoorde (who also plays the lead role). It's original title *C'est Arrivee Pres De Chez Vous* – which translates as 'Coming to your neighbourhood soon' – is an



Ben. *Man Bites Dog*.

intimation of where the movie's sensibilities lie: a pastiche of crime-busting TV Reality shows like *Cops* and *America's Most Wanted*. It follows Ben, a remorseless professional killer, who almost dismissively murders people everyday. More than that, it follows him through the lens of a filmmaking team who are constructing a documentary. Like the TV shows it parodies, *Man Bites Dog* is at once sensationalist, banal and voyeuristic.

The movie opens to Ben choking a woman on a train. In the next shot, he sits at a river's edge explaining how best to weight the body before dumping it. His manner is wooden and a little awkward. Ballast for children and midgets, he says, is not the same as that of the average adult. It all sounds like a mathematical formula and very important. When Ben throws the body bag from a bridge, it bobs on the surface anyway.

In typical documentary fashion, interviews with kin help colour the subject. Ben's mother and grandparents all appear totally oblivious to their offspring's occupation, and engage in some warm, distant anecdote (in actuality, they are the actor's *real* parents and have no idea that this isn't a real documentary about their son).

A postman doing his rounds is dragged into a doorway and out of sight. The film crew follow and the director calls for lights. Illuminated, the scene is that of Ben pummelling the man's head against a wall, then kicking him in the face. Casually, Ben notes, "I like to start the month with a postman." Later, the killer can be seen strolling around in a postman's uniform, on the look-out for any opportunity that might present itself. He sees two children playing and asks whether the crew are filming him or the kids behind him. He takes from the children their toy popgun and pops one with the dart. While only joking and fooling around, there is an air of menace to the episode. As if to affirm this foreboding, there follows a barrage of quick-fire edits in which Ben is seen blasting dead a whole stream of anonymous individuals.

It is difficult not to like Ben, he is crass and funny and hates everybody. He thinks himself erudite and waffles interminably on most any topic and, while deadly serious about his work, there is a sense of the theatrical in what he does. In one scene, walking through an apartment complex, he comments on the aesthetic of the architecture and condemns the colour of the brickwork: "Blood is the colour of violence . . . and red wine."

Knocking on the door of an old lady, Ben explains that he and his filmmaking friends are compiling "a report on loneliness in high-rise buildings." Once inside the apartment, his first question concerns the locale of the woman's acquaintances and how often they visit. While furnishing an answer, Ben suddenly bellows into her ear "*GRANNY SNUFF, EVER BEEN SNUFFED OUT?!*" The woman keels over. Turning to the camera, Ben then explains how he noticed from her medication the woman suffered a heart problem; this way he not only saves a bullet, but makes it easier all round for everybody – for him, for the crew, for the neighbours.

As the novelty of being tailed by a film crew wears off, Ben's wooden, very important and formal monologues of the earlier scenes are replaced by the more homely dick-size observations and piss-ups at the local bar.

By way of a challenge inadvertently put to him by the crew, Ben breaks into a house in one of the richer suburbs of the city. He punches the woman who answers the door in the face. She collapses onto the floor, hyperventilating. He moves through the house, finding a man shaving in the bathroom. He smashes the man's head repeatedly on the edge of the sink, before telling the soundman to put his microphone on the back of the guy's neck. There is a loud crack as Ben breaks the neck. A little boy screams and Ben gives chase. They run into the garden. Aggravated, Ben tells the crew to turn off the lights. When the lights return, Ben has the boy. He then suffocates the child while telling the crew that children are always bad business. When no money is found in the house, Ben blames the crew.

Following a boxing accident, and Ben's release from hospital in a neck brace, a few friends gather to hold a birthday party. At the table, the guests hand Ben his presents. One gift is a genuine leather gun holster. Overjoyed, Ben tries it out, slipping his gun in and out, in and out, finally shooting in the head the annoying guest who simply won't shut up.

Sitting at a moviola, watching film of himself flooring a postman in an alley and the postman kicking free and running away, Ben comments on the bungled murder attempt. He rewinds the film and notes the error in his technique. What's more, the neck brace is proving too restrictive; he can't move. Annoyed, he tells the crew, "At least you could have given me a hand."

The ending of *Man Bites Dog* does not bode well for either Ben



or the crew. In the best tradition of the gangster movie, the law catches up and Ben is locked away. He soon escapes however and meets up with the filmmakers at his secret hideaway. At the hideaway Ben and the crew are gunned down.

*Slow motion. Shot rings out. Bullet strikes Ben in forehead. Tumbles backward. Shot rings out. Camera drops to floor. Lop-sided, soundman runs. Shot rings out. Piercing whistle, then silence as soundman falls. Only movement now is curl of dust unsettled, rising. Film runs to leader.*

*Man Bites Dog* is in black & white and shot on 16mm. No matter how preposterous the events, the constant hand-held *vérité* style draws the viewer into the picture. Everything we see on the screen is courtesy of the film crew. However, as viewer, we are actually privy to more than the filmmakers themselves. Like the ill-fated jungle expedition of *Cannibal Holocaust*, the filmmakers' manner and technique is as much a subject for profile as that of Ben himself. And it isn't too long before the anonymous faces behind the lens are familiar in front of it, as Ben increasingly calls for the team's help in, say, stuffing a body into the trunk of a car; after shooting a black night watchman and refusing to touch the body because of "green monkeys . . . and AIDS," getting the team to dump the body themselves; and actually handing them his gun so that they can shoot dead a rival documentary team (who are making a film about a rival killer).

The movie is at once brutal, funny and astonishingly clever. Co-director André Bonzel has commented that the intention is to "make the audience laugh, then have them think about what they've just laughed at. The whole point is to say to the viewer – Look, how can you accept this?" In accordance, James Ferman, head of the BBFC, explained why *Man Bites Dog* was passed uncut while *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* suffered from trimming. He claimed *Man Bites Dog* has a definite moral sense working behind it, that it ultimately condemns what it portrays, while *Henry* on the other hand, offers no such definition and gives the viewer a free reign on making of it what they will. But, *Man Bites Dog* is satire, its bloody excesses more akin to an extended Monty Python sketch than *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. A tragic sense of loss prevails when the 'villains' are gunned down by hitmen in the final reel.



*Man Bites Dog.*

In 1985, Ruggero Deodato returned to the 'green inferno' with what was virtually a modified remake of *Cannibal Holocaust: Cut and Run*. A television camera crew travel to the jungles of South America to discover the fate of Jim Jones disciple, Colonel Horne (Richard Lynch) and a missing teenager. Technological advancements provide

the one-man, one-woman crew with equipment that beams back their progress, live, to the broadcast station. Following encounters with wildlife and natives, Horne is finally tracked down. After being wounded, he provides the reporters with a brief interview that culminates in his own requested execution. The scene continually cuts back and forth from the actual event to the television station where the scene is viewed on a wall of video monitors. Transmission void of sound, a lip-reader interprets Horne's final words. "Tell your cameraman to hold steady. I'm offering him a moment not even the Reverend Master Jones gave anybody," he remarks, seconds before he is decapitated.

Walter Hill's *Trespass* [1992] incorporates a sequence where a man's murder is committed to videotape. In Russell Mulcahy's *Ricochet* [1991], TV cameras converge on feuding protagonists as they fight to the death. John Russo's *Midnight 2: Sex, Death and Videotape* [1993] picks up the story initiated 10-years previous in Russo's *Midnight*. Abraham, a child in the earlier film, has developed into a psychotic adult and spends his free time murdering people and recording the acts with his video camera. Snuff is hinted at in a surreal moment on board a sinking ship in Philip Noyce's *Dead Calm* [1989]. A (staged) assassination attempt is captured on film in Tim Robbins' *Bob Roberts* [1992]. Peter Jackson's puppet movie *Meet the Feebles* [1989], has a sequence in which an insect is squashed by a hippopotamus; a cameraman filming the event cries: "Maybe I can sell it as a snuff movie." (The German print of *Feebles* has a single instance of censorship control. The snuff reference has been changed to: "...sell it as *violent pornography*.")

In Paola Cavara's *The Savage Eye* [1967/8], a thoroughly unscrupulous filmmaker, while travelling the desert, badgers his friends into believing they are hopelessly lost and without water. "We're on the edge of death!" he torments. Securing on film the desired reaction from his friends, he then saves the day. Willing to do anything and set up any situation, the cameraman gets street beggars beaten up, incites an uprising in Vietnam, and convinces Buddhist monks to set themselves ablaze. All for the sake of the camera. It tells us a lot that director Paolo Cavara should have also worked on *Mondo Cane*, the precursor to a genre of incredible documentary.

# MONDO FILM



# SABANA VIOLENTA

( "HOMBRES SALVAJES, BESTIAS SALVAJES" 2ª PARTE )

un film de ANTONIO CLIMATI y MARIO MORRA

música de GUIDO y MAURIZIO DE ANGELIS · Color



*nobody's interested in sex any more*

---

## 4. A History of Mondo Cinema

Being a feature-length melange of exotic sights and startling incidents from global locations, the mondo film originally professed to show the viewer genuine and spontaneously filmed events; incidents that could be granted the most perilous of continuity via the condescending, haughty, repulsed, or excited commentaries of a narrator.

A nude man is seen playing ball with an Alsatian dog. The commentator on the soundtrack informs that lonely, desperate Vietnam veterans, unable to find solace and compassion back in civilised society, turn to their pets for companionship. The man then drops on his hands and knees and the dog mounts him – such is this veteran's needs.

In Singapore, a doctor claiming to have introduced new techniques in sex-change operations, struggles to be heard over the noisy whir of the camera. Surgery follows in which a man has his scrotum sliced open, testicles removed and penis amputated. The


remaining urinary tubes and flapping tissue are then moulded into an imitation vaginal slit. Further incisions under the armpits allow the kneading of cavities in the chest area and the insertion of silicon implants.

"With the advent of modern transportation," intones the pasty-faced narrator, "new killing machines have been developed." This hypothesis is illustrated with footage of a dead woman who, while riding a bicycle, was crushed beneath the wheels of a truck. Not content with one bloody corpse, the remains of 146 people, mutilated beyond recognition after a 727 jetliner crashed into a San Diego suburb, are also displayed.

This is the mondo film. In these examples, episodes from Claudio Racca's *Love*, Emerson Fox's *Shocking Asia*, and Conan Le Cilaire's *Faces of Death*, documentaries where fact runs secondary to exploitation.


*Love* purports to be about 'the strange ways of love in today's modern world'; *Shocking Asia*, the less frequented sights of the largest continent; *Faces of Death* the study of man's greatest fear – death. All brazen. All 'true'. Quite literally, sensationalist travelogues from around the world; the *raison d'être* being to shock the audience with an exposé of bizarre cultural behaviour, fluctuating from the exotic to the erotic to the undeniably repellent.

Compilations of nightclub acts like *European Nights* in 1959 and *World by Night* in 1960 are, fundamentally, mondo pictures. So too



**WORLD  
BY NIGHT** FROM BALLET  
TO BURLESQUE

THE SENSATION-FILLED  
MOTION PICTURE THAT HAS  
SMASHED ALL RECORDS  
ALL OVER EUROPE!

PRESENTED BY  
**TECHNIRAMA® · TECHNICOLOR® · WARNER BROS.** 

Directed by LUIGI VANZI    Produced by JULIA FILM

**DOUBLE  
SHOCKER  
SHOCK!**

**MONDO  
CANE NO. 1**

AND

**MONDO  
CANE NO. 2**

**YOU WON'T BELIEVE  
YOUR EYES!**



are the many previously filmed explorations through the continent of Africa. However, it was not until 1962 and the release of *Mondo Cane* that the genre commenced in earnest.

*Mondo Cane*: An observation of ideals and customs throughout the world, illustrating the proposition that 'it's a dog's life'. It includes the people of Rudolph Valentino's hometown, Castellanta, Italy, who still revere the star's memory, while the actor Rossano Brazzi is besieged by adoring women who tear the shirt off his back. In pursuit of a mate, New Guinea maidens are compared to bikini-clad girls on the French Riviera. A bereaved mother in New Guinea nurses a suckling pig at her breast; elsewhere in the region, pigs are slaughtered when inhabitants of a village end a fast. In California, pet dogs are given lavish funerals, while in Tai Pei, puppies are considered a delicacy and eaten. Food is forced down the throats of Strasbourg geese to provide *pâté de foie gras*, and Tokyo calves are made to consume six quarts of beer daily. Women on a pacific island are not considered suitable for marriage to the king if they weigh any less than 300 pounds. By contrast, American women seek to lose



weight at Vic Tanny's gym. Hong Kong markets sell crocodiles, toads, lizards and snakes; a swank New York restaurant serves its diners butterflies, muskrat, stuffed beetles, and ants. In the small Italian village of Calabria, penitents lacerate their legs with glass in the streets. Sydney beaches are monitored by 16-year-old female lifeguards. On another shoreline, turtles poisoned by atomic radiation cannot find their way back to sea after laying their eggs on the beach. Following several attacks, Malaysian fishermen take revenge on sharks by forcing poisonous sea urchins into their throats. Children polish the skulls of unknown victims of the plague in Roman catacombs. Beer drinkers in Hamburg carouse and fight all through the night. In Singapore, a family feasts while awaiting the passing of a relative in a 'house of death'. American tourists in Hawaii pay to learn authentic hula dancing. Gurkha warriors show their strength by decapitating steers. Runaway bulls in Portugal kill four people. Finally, natives of a New Guinean village have built a make-shift airstrip and await the arrival of an airplane from Paradise.

Largely consisting of ill-fitting comparables, this kaleidoscope of audacity was a massive box office success the world over. It was inevitable that imitations would follow. Moreover, *Mondo Cane* became a blueprint for a genre, lending its name, form and narrative to several generations of filmmakers who continue to make mondo films to this very day.

*The Oxford Companion to Film* says of *Mondo Cane* (pronounced *car-nay*; literal translation: 'Dog World') that a "veneer of impartiality masks a zestful collection of outré, repellent, or misguided examples of human behaviour in various parts of the world." The film appeared in Britain in 1963 but was not granted a certificate by the BBFC. By today's standards, *Mondo Cane* would appear almost quaint and rational. This said, every production the genre has had to offer in its wake has been systematic of *Cane* in some way, using nothing that hadn't already been employed by that feature.

A typical motif of the mondo genre is gross misinformation; mondo may seem informative, but it is rarely educational. According to *Days of Fury*, because of dwindling water supplies animals are dying on the savanna. This is illustrated with an elephant, the obvious victim of a gunshot wound, having its tusks removed by ivory poachers.



Little of what transpires makes sense in mondo. Usually, the narration is travelling at such breakneck speed from one episode to the next, the viewer can barely pause for breath or has chance to assimilate just what it is that is purportedly happening. An episode may be gone and a film over before the magnitude of, "The effects of certain customs and their applications are today verified facts," (*Journey into the Beyond*) or "A world without souls would not be a world – it would be a pile of trash," (*Shocking Asia*) are fully digested.

As well as duplicating the visual and narrative composite, imitators of *Cane* have also utilized a similarly pompous orchestral score<sup>1</sup> and a 'catchy' theme song. No doubt *Mondo Cane*'s song *More*, reaching the top ten of the pop charts and being nominated for Best Song Oscar 63, encouraged its immediate successors to try and achieve a similar hit. Down the years, the inclusion of a ridiculous

saccharine ballad ('Why, don't ask me why/Why there is a sky' in *Addio Ultimo Uomo* is fairly typical) has become mandatory to the mondo filmmaker, almost as necessary as the narration. Sometimes a few bars of this uplifting piece will curtail a particularly unpleasant scene. Often – along with the sight of the sun setting – it will bring the film to its close. Even in the more aggressive mondo cinema of later years, the happy, churlish ballad is a tradition that refuses to die.

Perhaps the foremost criticism directed at mondo is that the filmmakers aren't always documenting spontaneous events as they claim, but are manipulating them or making them happen outright. Such a set-up might stem from the fairly innocuous, like the artist Yves Klein in *Mondo Cane* using nude women as paintbrushes, to the actual killing of a man in *Africa Addio*. While it remains irrefutable that Klein is a painter and that a man is shot dead, it is the authenticity of the scenario which must come under question. Is this how it happened? Why is it happening? What is making it happen? Could it not be that the slightest of coercion exists between filmmakers and subject?

For many people celluloid is the truth – whatever it shows and whatever it says is not an issue for contention. Which is why *Go, Go, Go World!* can smugly proclaim in its advertising, "We didn't make the world – we just photographed it!"

Animals are slaughtered with sickening regularity in mondo cinema, whether it be for food, fur, or ritual. Of all the film crews making their mondo films, it seems almost too convenient that almost each and every one of them should arrive in time for a tribal 'feast' or just happen upon the massacre of a herd of elephants. Similarly, when a dying goat is seen dragging itself alone and dehydrated through the desert in *Addio Ultimo Uomo*, one must ask, how did it get there in the first place? Or, when a turtle is seen flipped on its shell and near death in *Mondo Cane*, how did the sorry creature manage to invert itself?

Contrivance lies at the very core of some sequences. Despite what is claimed or depicted, events like *Macabro*'s execution by python and people playing Russian roulette with moving trains have no element of factual basis. Other sequences are total re-enactments, but are rarely announced as being such. Director Romano Vanderbes – in response to an accusation in the German magazine *Splating Image* – agreed that his *America Exposed: The Motion Picture* was

## Morticians Market Post-Mortem Sex



Lovers of the Dead!



America's widespread custom of examining the dead has fostered the practice of Necrophilia: the ultimate taboo. Big city

*America Exposed: The Motion Picture.*

manufactured entirely of re-enactments *but* that he had based each episode on an actual news report. Vanderbes forwarded several of the news clippings he had used as source material. Indeed, the pressbook for *America Exposed* looks and reads like a glorified edition of the *Weekly World News*. But, ought a personal address from a film's director be necessary to determine fact from factual reconstruction?

As the valid mondo production often deceived and exploited its audience, then so too did perfidious film producers capitalise on mondo's box-office reputation. This cash-in resulted in the appearance of numerous titles like *Mondo Bizarro*, *Mondo Daytona*, *Mondo Mod*, *Mondo Topless*, *Mondo Infame*, *Mondo Hollywood* and so on. All appearing in the 60s and riding in the wake of *Mondo Cane*, the majority relied on plain nudity for sensationalism. The influx of cheap parodies had all but destroyed mondo's credibility. Which is why, towards the 70s, the term 'mondo' was used less frequently in the title, even though it was the same style of film being produced.

The sexual attributes of the mondo film provided a mild degree of titillation – a cunning way to depict nudity in days prior to the legalisation of pornography. Brutality and violence are other essential ingredients that add to the unrepentant infringement of taboos that draw the mondo audience. These aspirations are often achieved with startling images of primitive customs and rituals. Such spectacles of scarification practices, wholesale circumcision, vaginal dilation, graphic animal sacrifice, funerary rites and tribal murder are

commonly displayed. Most productions exploit these primitive cultures with a racist attitude. *Mondo Cane*, for instance, refused to expose any Caucasian nudity. It was *suggested*, but never displayed. It was only the naked flesh of the Afro-Caribbeans that was exhibited to supplement the titillation factor. Moreover, when the mondo film ventured into full-frontal mutilation and murder, the dark-skinned races would remain the victims of the camera's unflinching eye. Such horrifying atrocities, however, were at least a decade away from *Mondo Cane*'s conception in 1962.

It is curious how today 'mondo' has become a catch-all expression for anything factual in all aspects of cinema (particularly when one considers the rather capricious manner in which the mondo film has handled 'fact'). A liberal interpretation of 'mondo' will not only encompass everything from nudist films, amateur casting couch sex shorts, medical films, TV programmes utilizing strange optical effects – but also feature films. Open heart surgery footage, for instance, inserted in Rene Cardona's horror yarn about a homicidal human gorilla, has granted *Night of the Bloody Apes* [1968] a tenuous mondo element. Farmyard brutalities and dwarves have done the same for Werner Herzog's *Even Dwarves Started Small* [1969], a movie about rebellion in a penal colony. Genuine human anomalies were used throughout Tod Browning's *Freaks* [1932], and Jack Cardiff's *The Mutations*, as well as in the Doors of Hell sequence terminating Michael Winner's *The Sentinel* [1977]. David Durston's *Stigma* [1972] has a sequence in which slides of syphilis victims are displayed. *Man Behind the Sun* [1987] has scenes of cat mutilation and an autopsy. Brazilian stage and TV actress Wanda Kosmo chewed off the head of a hen in José Mojica Marins' *Exorcismo*



*Story of a Junkie.*

*Negro* [1974]. A cow is ritually slaughtered in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* [1979], repeated again, along with its real-life inspiration, in *Hearts of Darkness* [1991]. Lech Kowalski's *Story of a Junkie* [1985] is a movie with real people using their real names, re-enacting scenes they have actually experienced. And so on.

Perhaps the original connotations of the term were obscured somewhat by John Waters naming an early feature film *Mondo Trasho* [1969] (which opens to the scene of a hooded man hacking the heads off chickens). Similarly, *Mondo Keyhole* [1966] and *Mondo Weirdo: A Trip to Paranoia Paradise* [198-] are both movies related to the genre only in title.<sup>2</sup> The Italian cannibal epics, instigated in earnest with Umberto Lenzi's *Deep River Savages* [1972], are a natural symptom of the mondo film, continuing a cinematic tradition of racism and animal slaughter.

Having established what mondo is *not*; before moving on to analyze key instances of death in mondo film [next chapter], let us look briefly at the genus itself – what it was and what it has become.

In 1948, the World Union of Documentary Filmmakers defined documentary film as:

... All methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and widening the human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture and human relations.

While, in his book *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, Richard Meran Barsam writes:

... For the most part, the technique of a nonfiction film is less important than its content.

Of the above, although it can be seen that the mondo cinema does fulfil certain criteria, it falls short of others. *Sincere? Solutions? Nonfiction?* More accurate would be to isolate the mondo film altogether: if it is a documentary, then it is a *mondo documentary*.

The mondo film has roots throughout the history of cinema.



Almost as soon as the medium of moving pictures was established, Thomas Edison was filming *An Execution by Hanging* and individuals unknown were producing the first hardcore sex reels towards the end of the 1890s. In Britain, 1905, a film called *The Life of Charles Peace* ended with the outlaw's simulated hanging, performed in a realistic manner. 1906 saw the advent of the Newsreel series, *Day by Day*. And on kinetoscope machines in penny arcades, people could see actual newsreels of the beheading of a Chinese criminal outside Mukden, the guillotining of four French criminals at Bethune, and the hanging of a man in Missouri. Innumerable documentary films sprang up, many of which utilized staged sequences, not least, Robert Flaherty's acclaimed *Nanook of the North* [1921]. 1927 brought with it sound newsreels. An expedition into the Belgian Congo, *Ingagi* [1930] purported to be a document of fact, but 'Sir Hubert Winstead', the narrator, was bogus, as was the human sacrifice that closed the picture. For the purpose of making a lasting record of the different primitive tribes there, the "French government and the Museum of Man" dispatched a group of scientists into Equatorial Africa. The result, released into theatres as *Savage Africa* [1950], promised pygmies engaged in an elephant hunt, a fertility dance ("performed by

a tribe famous for their beauty"), and an overland trading expedition "during which one of the crew is killed by a rogue lion." The Dark Continent became a source of unending fascination for both documentary and feature film makers (the "Savage Danger! Primitive Love! Thrills Unimagined!" of *Strange World*, and the "Unbelievable! Untamed! Unforgettable!" jungle hell promised by *African Fury* being fairly typical). The outbreak of World War II in 1939 saw further parodies of fact: one of the most elaborate scenes from *Stalingrad* [1943], for instance, showed the link-up of the two Soviet armies who had cut off the German troops besieging the city. The scene has long lines of infantry running towards each other across snow-covered fields, embracing and cheering as they meet. In reality, the first units to link up were motorized and they met in fog. *Desert Victory* [1943]





was made to celebrate the second battle of El Alamein – some of it was filmed in Egypt, some of it was filmed on the back-lot at Pinewood Studios, with night-time tracer bullet arcs being substituted by lighted matches thrown a couple of feet away from the camera. In the United States, pictures that didn't meet with the strict Hollywood Production Code's 'Seal of Approval' could be seen on the road show circuit. William Beaudine's *Mom and Dad* [1946] was one such attraction with its actual 'birth of a baby' reel. Another, *Karamoja* [1954], must stand as one of the earliest, most discernable entries into the mondo cycle. Atop a jaunty narration, and unflinching glimpse of the primitive lifestyle of the Karamoja tribe in Africa (which included cattle slaughter, drinking of blood, nudity and body modification), promoter Kroger Babb – "America's most fearless showman" – bolstered the lurid ad campaign: "*See it all! Uncut! Uncensored! Unclothed! Unashamed!*"<sup>3</sup>

In 1962, journalist Gualtiero Jacopetti, the man who had penned the narration on two previous mondo pictures, *European Nights* and *World by Night*, teamed with Paolo Cavara and Franco Prosperi to create *Mondo Cane*.

The history of mondo cinema that follows is not intended as a comprehensive listing; such a task would prove fruitless and be pointless to this book. However, it *is* a study as to how the genre has evolved and developed from the burlesque of the 60s into the death-loving medium it has become today. It is a chronology of the shocking, the more ridiculous, the more influential, and some of the more rare titles the genre has had to offer.

Mondo cinema is largely ignored in film criticism. Whether in works considering popular cinema or nonfiction/documentary cinema, rarely is mondo deemed worthy of a mention, let alone study. Yet, as the sheer volume of titles below will testify, the genre *has* been popular and it *is* influential. Perhaps academia considers mondo to be unworthy of 'serious' attention, or its convolutions too laborious to decipher? Whatever, it is ironic that critics should exercise such control over a genre that thrives on misinformation.

In 1963 came *Mondo Cane 2*. Also known as *Mondo Pazzo*, Jacopetti and Prosperi's sequel treads much the same ground as the original volume, except the composition is just that bit more laboured, harsher, more fake-looking and the narrative more sardonic than

OUT-MONDO'S THEM ALL! AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL presents COLOR



# TABOOS OF THE WORLD

With comments by VINCENT PRICE

before. Roberto Montero returned with *Mondo Infame* that same year. Romolo Marcellini's *Taboos of the World* hired Vincent Price and professed to "out-mondo them all" with scenes of ritual finger amputation, the effects of leprosy and other Third World excesses. (*Taboos Around the World* was a cut version of the same movie, without Price's narration.) Jacopetti and Prosperi squeezed in *Women*

## NEVER BEFORE SEEN ON THE SCREEN... THE TRUTH ABOUT SLAVERY—TODAY!

This is the SHOCK of your life!



## SLAVE TRADE IN THE WORLD TODAY



SEE FOR THE FIRST TIME—THE SMUGGLED MOTION PICTURES  
OF A SHEIK'S HAREM AND AN ACTUAL SLAVE AUCTION!

Every incredible scene is real!

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# MODERN WOMEN VS PRIMITIVE MEN!

SOMETIMES FEROCIOUS...SOMETIMES ALLURING!

SEE! SKULL COLLECTORS OF BORNEO!

SEE! EXOTICS OF THE EAST!

SEE! HONG KONG RED LIGHT DISTRICT!

SEE! "DOLL HOUSES" OF JAPAN!

SEE! CHILD SELLING IN CHINA!

... and Much, Much More!

**"WEIRD, WICKED  
WORLD"!**

...AFTER "MONDO CANE"!

**IN COLOR!**

THE STRANGEST  
CANDID MOVIE  
OF ALL TIME!

**WHAT YOUR EYES SEE...YOUR MIND WON'T BELIEVE!**

Also known as *Go, Go, Go World!*

of the World, promising "starlets and street-walkers, beauties and bank presidents, hussies and heroines, and warriors and worriers," mostly compiled with remainder footage from *Mondo Cane*. Gianni Proia forced the boundaries of decency yet further with *Ecco*, a combination of Proia's own *World by Night No 2* with new footage: Evon Evah piercing his body with needles, reindeer castration and a performance by the Grand Guignol Theatre. Lee Frost edited *Ecco* for the US and Bob Cresse handled the script. Giuseppe Maria Scotese directed *Le Citta Proibite*, while, from Japan came Tetsuji Takechi's *Women . . . Oh, Women!* Mino Loy excelled himself with *Notti E*

*Donne Proibite*, *Novanta Notti In Giro Per Il Mondo*, *Supersexy '64*, and *Veneri Proibite*. All four being compilations of strip acts. All 1963.

Loy returned in 1964 with *Le Mille E Una Donna*, more striptease acts, and Marcello Martinelli followed suit with *Sexy Proibitissimo*, detailing striptease through the ages. Paola Cavara – collaborative director on *Mondo Cane* and *Women of the World* – directed *Malamondo* in 1964. Nobuo Nakagawa did *Spots in the Sun* that same year. Roberto Malenotti's *Slave Trade in the World Today* had a decidedly unpleasant flogging sequence but was, on the whole, rather tedious. Boris Karloff provided the narration for Roberto Montero's *Mondo Balordo*, which included in its itinerary, how filmmakers utilize special effects. Antonio Margheriti and Renato Marvi's *Go, Go, Go World!* was a last ditch attempt to capture the globe-trotting, flow-of-consciousness formula of *Mondo Cane* before the genre tried to handle thematic continuity. Despite reaching a nadir in sarcastic narration, it had nothing original to offer. Thor Brooks' *Kwaheri – Vanishing Africa* was one of the few mondo pictures of the early 60s *not* to come from Italy. It promised a trip into previously unfiled lands, with an advertising tactic – provided by Kroger Babb – focusing on the sexual and violent attributes of the film independently. This, it was reasoned, would give the film two potential audiences. One poster guaranteed pygmie sex orgies and witch doctors' powers over women; all filmed 'in the land of Kisee – home of the Suks' (the sexual connotations and *double entendres* are quite obvious). The contrasting poster offered the burning of a virgin, hex of the arm torture and brain surgery performed without drugs.

In 1965, Alessandro Jacovoni's *Wild Wild World* pledged to be



so exciting it would leave the audience limp. "So startling, so shocking, so strange you won't believe it even after you've seen it," promised Eddie Bracken's narration. With *Macabro*, Romolo Marcellini allowed us one of the foremost glimpses at what would become a staple of mondo documentary: tribal circumcision. From Great Britain came Arnold Louis Miller's *Primitive London*, replete with wrestlers, stag shows, beatniks, mods, and rockers. From France came Edouard Logereau's *Secret Paris*: circus freaks, dead bodies for medical experimentation, cults, a black mass, and slaughtered animals.

Jacopetti and Prosperi were back in 1966 with *Africa Addio*. The most brutal of the mondo documentaries thus far, it set a standard in repulsion which all subsequent entries into the genre were required to surpass. Allegedly the result of three years of travel through Africa,



VENTURE BEHIND  
THE LOCKED DOORS OF  
THOSE CLUBS WHERE  
GIRLS WILL DO  
ANYTHING FOR A PRICE



SEE THE LADY  
MUD WRESTLERS  
OF BERLIN IN A  
DECADENT EXHIBITION  
OF DEGRADATION



ABSOLUTELY ADULTS ONLY!

LOOK AT  
THE POVERTY  
AND DESPAIR  
OF TIJUANA  
AS IT SPAWNS  
HUMAN EVIL  
BEYOND  
DESCRIPTION  
IN HUMAN  
SLAVERY



WITNESS  
A BLACK MASS  
PERFORMED  
IN THE CENTER  
OF MANHATTAN  
BY PUERTO RICAN  
IMMIGRANTS

THE SCENES  
IN THIS FILM  
ARE REAL -  
TOO REAL FOR  
THE IMMATURE!

**mondo  
freudo**

(THE WORLD OF FREUD)  
**IN COLOR**

AN OLYMPIC INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATION

the directors captured the racial, ethnic, political, and social upheavals that took place during the country's transition from colonialism to independence. Although controversial, *Africa Addio* did badly at the box office. It seemed that over two hours of bloodshed and mayhem was simply too much for most people without silly little visual asides.

Whether Black Mass or voodoo rites are taking place, if Manhattan and Tokyo look uncannily similar when viewed from within closed doors, then chances are it has something to do with Bob Cresse and R.L. Frost shooting *Mondo Freud* and *Mondo Bizarro* back-to-back (under pseudonyms). Both released in 1966, *Mondo Freud* (*The World of Freud*) claimed to be "too real for the immature" with its depiction of mud wrestling, human slavery and prostitution. *Mondo Bizarro*, on the other hand, set within a "world of beauty, sensuality and repulsion," offered massage parlours, human slavery and a pin-cushion man. One sequence depicted neo-Nazi theatrical performances filmed in Germany, though it is not believed Cresse or Frost shot anything for either film outside of Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps a little salubrious, but belying its mondo origins nonetheless, is *The London Nobody Knows* [1967]. James Mason narrates while Norman Cohen directs his camera through the gentleman's lavatory at Holborn station, a Salvation Army hostel, and the 'catacombs' beneath Camden freight terminal. The same year, Salvatore



BE SHOCKED BY THE BRUTALITY OF TODAY'S NEO-NAZI THEATRE!

BLUSH AT THE 10,000 YEN MASSAGE PARLORS OF YOKOHAMA!

THRILL TO THE SENSUALITY OF A VOODOO RITUAL IN NASSAU!

WE DARE YOU TO SEE  
**MONDO BIZARRO**  
FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU —  
"ECCO" and "MONDO FREUDO"

**A RAW, FACTUAL REPORT ON THE STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF TEENAGERS  
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!**

**MONDO  
TEENO**

... IS THE TEENAGE REBELLION  
AROUND THE WORLD!

**See • HIDDEN SECRETS OF "HIPPIE" CULTS.**

- WEIRD TEENAGE RITUALS THAT RESEMBLE TRIBAL RITES.
- STRANGE "BEHIND THE SCENES" REPORT ON PARIS DISCOTHEQUES.
- OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS.
- JAPANESE LOVE HABITS.
- SHOCKING PSYCHEDELIC "TRIPS"

**Their Battle Cry is "MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR!!!"**

NORMAN HERMAN BURT TOPPER AN UNGER PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTATION A TRANS AMERICAN RELEASE

Billitteri's *Sadismo* concentrated on the more unpleasant attributes of human nature, but managed to inject into its look at concentration camp footage and torture devices, a fair share of the female form. Stanis Nievo, who had been credited on Jacopetti and Prosperi's *Africa Addio*, embarked on his own directorial adventure with *Mal d'Africa* [1967]. Covering the same ground as the former, Nievo's picture was soon all but forgotten in the mondo landscape. "Africa is seeking to find herself," opines Nievo's commentary. "Much could be said of this film," retorted the *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

Robert Carl Cohen's *Mondo Hollywood*, heralded the arrival of the youth-market mondo picture and was suitably 'happening' with hippies, acid references, body painting, freak-out fashions, Vietnam war protestations, and a soundtrack occasionally reminiscent of The

Mothers of Invention.<sup>5</sup> This was quickly followed by Norman Herman's *Mondo Teeno* (boasting British sequences filmed by Richard Lester), Peter Perry's *Mondo Mod*, Pierre Roustang's *Teenagers*, and Edgar Beatty's *The World of Acid (The Hippie Revolt)*, all 1967, all tripping.

This trend continued into 1968 with Frank Willard's *Mondo Daytona: How To Swing on your Spring Vacation*, a rather tame 'hidden-camera' peek at college students frolicking in Daytona Beach, Florida. The hippies and diggers of Barry Feinstein's *You Are What You Eat* [1968] – described by the promoters as the "pop film of the century" – grooved to the sounds of Tiny Tim, and The Electric Flag. Apart from a belated entry in 1971, François Reichenbach's *We Have Come For Your Daughters* (of which the US Ratings Board demanded that a shot of a young mother nursing her infant while smoking a joint be deleted to earn the film an R-rating), teen mondo dancing and blasting pretty much petered-out with Jack O'Connell's *Revolution* [1968]; a view of a hepatitis and crime-ridden Haight Ashbury.

Shocking things happen in Sweden, not least of all incest, drug addiction, nudism, and wife-swapping. Luigi Scattini's *Sweden – Heaven and Hell* [1968], illustrates its "research" with seedy episodes such as an alcoholic chewing on boot polish for its slight alcohol content. Another scene alludes to pornographic films, "the titles of which we are not even allowed to mention." An investigation of the sex impulse – and beach wear – is the predilection of Vittorio De Sisti's *Excuse Me, Do You Like Sex?* [1968].

Joel M. Reed released *S-x by Advertisement* (aka *Sex by Advertisement*) in 1969, which purported to expose the personal ads placed in urban newspapers. As could be expected from the man who would later direct *Bloodsucking Freaks* [1978], such hidden truths include a New York marriage broker who preys on the physically disabled, a demented sadist who roams New York's Central Park and delights in whipping nude teenaged girls, and a procurer who poses as a theatrical producer to lure young women into prostitution.

1969 also marked another entry into what is almost a subgenre of the mondo film: Africa. Guido Guerrasio's *Secret Africa* was quite a repellent spectacle both in terms of what it showed and how it showed it. Mostly blown up from 16mm and shot on a variety of non-matching stocks, it doesn't for a moment shy away from images



such as a native eating larvae from a human skull, or the protracted close-up of a hippopotamus being dismembered. And, by this juncture in time, should there remain any doubt as to the exploitative incentive of mondo documentaries, then one need only question why the narration coyly avoids identifying many of the tribes or even the countries depicted, or why shots of similar ceremonies from other countries are intercut on occasion without explanation. Co-directed by Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni, and Oreste Pellini, the filmmakers had acquired enough surplus footage from this expedition to release *Africa Ama* two years later.

Benjamin Christensen's *Witchcraft Through the Ages* [1921], found itself applauded by fans of the mondo genre upon its re-release in 1969. With a series of historical re-enactments, and the acquisition of a new soundtrack, and narration by William Burroughs, it examines the history of witchcraft from Medieval times to the present-day (1920). Luigi Scattini was quick to complete his *Angeli Bianchi . . . Angeli Neri* [1969], a candid look at satanism and witchcraft throughout the world; Lee Frost was equally quick to snap it up and release it in the States the following year as *Witchcraft '70*, freshly edited and with several of his own sequences added. "Witchcraft in the United States. Absurd . . . or is it?" asks the narrator, suggesting that one would normally equate witchcraft with the British. He follows this assumption with footage of a black mass in Bedford.<sup>6</sup> One of Frost's post-production inserts was an interview with a Californian police officer (the subject inexplicably situated at some distance from the camera); another purported to show a secretly filmed Satanic ritual performed by hippies. The location of the rite is said to be in Devil's Canyon, a few miles from the Spahn ranch. The Manson analogy is used here as a deterrent to the evils of drugs and the occult. "Human sacrifice," the commentary concludes, "will always remain our greatest danger."

Exhausting the global encyclopedic view of *Mondo Cane*, a spectrum of subjects was explored for anything remotely deviant. If nudity and violence could be incorporated into an already sensational subject, then chances are it would evolve into a mondo film. As already seen, the world of acid and youth-culture harboured the necessary qualities, so too the personal ads in urban newspapers, and witchcraft. As it became increasingly difficult to find fresh subjects to milk, mondo



cinema channelled existing subject matter towards more sex and greater violence. In order to 'outshock any mondo picture ever made', it was necessary to give the audience severer shocks and a sweatier, kinkier sex. Frivolity was out; visceral was in. As never before, everything on the screen had to look convincing. Increasingly, mondo filmmakers boasted about the lengths they had gone to bring us their footage, as if this was authentication enough. For instance, a covert ambience was established in *Witchcraft '70* with the statement, "In some instances permission was granted to us to photograph witches performing their demonic rites. Others were less permissive and therefore it was necessary to steal our way into their black settings in an attempt to observe Satan's unspeakable and sometimes erotic

rites." This assertion of clandestine filming was used to substantiate the scene. It would be employed to a greater degree throughout Arthur Davis' unintentionally amusing contribution to the mondo genre, *Brutes And Savages* [1975].

Ironically, this new excess was inaugurated with the re-release, in 1970, of *Mondo Cane* and *Mondo Cane 2* as a double bill. With the more silly moments edited out, the Jerry Gross organisation promised 'DOUBLE SHOCKER SHOCK!' And what better time to dig through the mondo back catalogue and unearth that flop of 1966, *Africa Addio?* Trimmed of all its historical banter and pleasantries, *Africa Addio* was cut down from its original 138 minutes to 83 minutes – with violence and bloodletting intact – and released as *Africa Blood and Guts*. Non-stop carnage, it too was a hit in 1970.

Sergio Martino came up with *Naked and Violent* [1970], a round-up of contemporary American problems. (Although Martino preempted Romano Vanderbes' *This is America* by several years, Luigi Vanzi had already visited the land of the free in 1966, with his *America, Paese Di Dio*.) Along with racism in Fayette and Vietnam war demonstrations in Washington, *Naked and Violent* comfortably ogles the 'problem' of nude restaurants, body painting, hot rod racing, and a man inflating a blow-up doll. The only thing of interest in this drab investigation is the inclusion of yet another early and topical allusion to the Tate/LaBianca slayings. Following a long-shot of Roman Polanski's Hollywood Hills home, a "sect" of hippies is



shown making a blood sacrifice. Avoiding the mentioning of any names, the leader of the group is an obvious Manson clone and commands that candle wax be dripped onto the naked breasts of a girl. A (real) chicken then has its head cut off and blood poured over the "victim" (to a background of sitar music). The pleasures and past-times of crazy hippy youth subsequently takes up much of the remaining running time, with hippies seen munching on live beetles, a California Krishna group and hitching rides on Sunset Boulevard.

Luigi Scattini and Mino Loy teamed up for *Questo Sporco Mondo Meraviglioso* [1971], while, Jacopetti and Prosperi returned for *Farewell Uncle Tom* [1971]. Again trying to force the conventions they had already established, the two pioneering filmmakers gave mondo a new slant: they took it 'back in time'. Arriving via helicopter in the nineteenth century, Jacopetti and Prosperi depart the cottonfield of their landing and travel across the American South, observing the conditions in which slaves are bought, sold and transported to the plantations. They shoot film of slaves being crammed like cattle into holds of ships, feeding from troughs, being selectively bred on a stud-farm, and so on. If not for the time-setting and the surreal intrusion of the cameramen themselves (with some of the characters directing their monologues at the viewer), *Farewell Uncle Tom* would look every bit as sordid, convincing and real as the two directors' previous mondo efforts – yet this *cannot* be real.<sup>7</sup>

**"THE ONLY REALLY  
FUNNY MOVIE  
SINCE WOODY ALLEN'S  
'BANANAS'!"** –GREENSPUN,  
N.Y. TIMES

**Is there a movie that will  
make you laugh to death?  
Yes! Call (PHONE NUMBER) for title**

In his study of East African wildlife, Simon Trevor avoided presenting the brutalities of the great white hunter in *King Elephant* [1971], but not the excruciating commentary ("Come with us now to the misty plains") or sappy theme song ("Nobody has to ask the sun to shine/Nobody has to bend the rainbow"). Guido Guerrasio, Oreste Pellini, and Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni, returned with *Africa Ama* [1971].

The genre had unfolded so that Jeanne Abel and her hoaxer/comedian/musician husband, Alan, could take its motifs and make a successful – and very funny – parody: *Is There Sex After Death?* [1971]. In his Sexmobile, Dr. Harrison Rogers (Alan Abel) of the Bureau of Sexological Investigation, embarks on a fact-finding mission, seeking to interview everyone from the seasoned old Dr. Elevenike (surrounded by topless girls, currently "working on a course in sensuality, for young people") to porn filmmaker, Vince Domino ("my films have a lubricatory effect on the audience"). Achingly true to generic form, *Is There Sex After Death?* takes inane commentary, and rhetorical nonsense weaned from interview subjects, one step beyond mondo documentary. This proves there is an uncomfortably fine line separating bona fide from banality.<sup>8</sup>

Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni's *Mondo Magic* [1974] is said to have offended the unoffendable John Waters. Herb Schrader wrote in *Video Drive-In!* that it was "sick and bordering on snuff." While often disgusting, there is little to suggest it borders on snuff. The narrator marks a new precedent in breakneck gobbledegook, rampaging



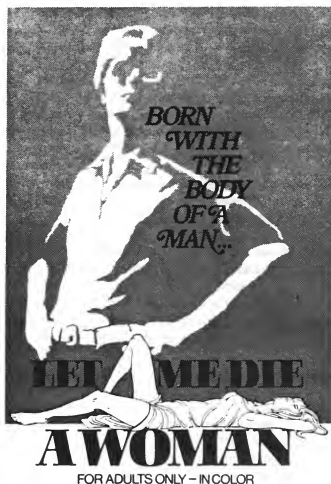
*Magia Nuda* (original title *Mondo Magic*).

through the script at a speed almost defying comprehension. "The linchpin of all existence is magic," he blurts, and so the theme of this mondo excursion is established. Animals are clubbed and skinned by African natives, while another is held suckling to a woman's breast. Children have their genitals wrenched; a finger is chopped off as a cure for a migraine headache; penitents flagellate. In one scene, that of naked, well-endowed men jumping up and down, the narration deems that "only slow motion does justice." At least the Abel's had the effrontery to furnish their nudist gathering with a frenetic *Good Golly Miss Molly* dance track.

Although visually constructed in the apoplectic manner of a mondo documentary, the absence of any over-riding narrative leaves *Of the Dead* [1972] a film rather alien to the genre. (We would go so far as to class it as an arthouse mondo film.) Cattle are sacrificed to appease the spirits of the new dead. A lucrative business is to be made from flying a plane and sprinkling the ashes of loved ones over the countryside. Dying people muse over death and ritual burials – the episodes are all-too familiar to the genre, but here the compilation smacks of sincerity. Directed by Jean-Pol Ferbus, Dominique Gamy, and Thierry Zeno, *Of the Dead* marks the dawning of the true-life documents of death; those video barrages of factual gruesome imagery that would become popular in the 1980s. Films such as *Death Scenes*, *Keeping People Alive*, *True Gore*.

Orson Welles turned his hand to fraudulent documentary in 1973 with *F For Fake* – a film about perception, reality and art forgeries. He later went on to narrate several mondo pictures: *The Late Great Planet Earth* [1977], about how the world would end in our lifetime, and *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow* [1981], about the prophecies of Nostrodamus and how the world would end in our lifetime.

One of the sleaziest, most peculiar entries into the genre was produced in 1973 (it wouldn't be released until 1978). Though she wasn't credited, Doris Wishman – director of such trash classics as *Bad Girls Go To Hell* [1966] and *Deadly Weapons* [1973] – was responsible for the remarkable *Let Me Die a Woman*. From behind a desk, a Dr. Leo Wollman muses "what, who and why are transsexuals?" With case histories, Wollman illustrates. He laments on one desperate young man who, unable to afford the cost of a sex-change operation, hacked off his penis with a chisel. Later, in one of the doctor's "regular" group therapy sessions, one woman explains,



"I always felt like a woman . . . even when I had a penis." The inopportune and obvious voice-over lends the scene a certain hilarity; more so when the camera focuses everywhere but on the subject doing the talking. There is footage of a sex-change operation – of a man becoming a woman – grainy and with inserts of a surgeon having his brow mopped. The jolly theme music plays on the soundtrack as a heartbeat pounds. Elsewhere, with the instruction that post-operative therapy require they "dilate the healing vagina," Wollman spends time fondling various dildos.<sup>9</sup>

1974 brought *Shocking Asia*. Although Emerson Fox is credited

Eine unglaubliche Dokumentation über den geheimnisvollen, verrückten und lustbetonten Kontinent.

# SÜNDE, SEX UND SUKIYAKI



as director, it is highly probable that this German/Hong Kong co-production was actually handled by Rolf Olsen (German director responsible for the following year's *Journey Into the Beyond*). Included in *Shocking Asia* are scenes of mass piercing in India; cremated remains being dumped into the Ganges next to bathers and drinkers; a club in Japan that enacts Nazi SM vignettes; a brothel, a sex museum, and a sex-change operation.

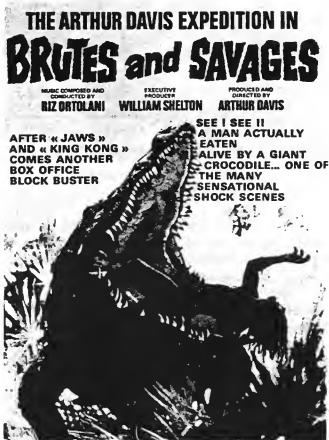
In the United States, *Shocking Asia* was packaged with *Mondo Magic* and released together as the 'Shock Box'. In 1985 came *Shocking Asia 2*. Although dedicated to the all-familiar customs, rituals, eating habits and prostitutes, it lacked the 'shocking' sex-change operation of its predecessor, substituting instead some outrageous burlesque acts: a trio of young women who draw on cigarettes inserted into their vaginas, a woman who pulls a string of razor blades from the same region, and so on. It is also a rather shoddy film, looking every



bit to have been assembled from out-takes of the first volume. Indeed, the most interesting moments of the picture come, not with footage shot by Fox/Olsen, but Chinese medical archive film depicting wolf children and a bizarre human oddity who sports a second vestigial face complete with salivating mouth.<sup>10</sup>

Jamie Uys' *Beautiful People* [1974], for Disney, was a study of the animal population of the desert lands of south-western Africa. Animals are seen in the Kovango basin, getting drunk on rotten fruit. The sequence is sandwiched between a glib commentary and inappropriate music. And, like many of Disney's True-Life Adventures, it includes staged moments being passed off as actual animal behaviour.

Arthur Davis, in his *Brutes and Savages* [1975], looked every bit



the great white hunter as he marched through the jungles of South America with natives in tow. Still in 1975, Rolf Olsen's *Journey Into the Beyond: The World of Supernatural* has a pre-credit sequence depicting destruction and mass conformity, giving in to a voice-over offering a "better way." This better way – non-conformity – includes scenes of an exorcism and Captain Edgar Mitchell, the Apollo 14 moonwalker, plugging his new book on parapsychology. One priceless sequence has a spiritualist agreeing to the film crew documenting a seance. This, the commentary notes, is to take place in the catacombs of an Italian monastery. The camera wanders around the catacombs and the many skulls and bones interred there. When the seance begins – almost in pitch darkness – the *barest* of forms can be made out. One of them is the spiritualist in a trance. The narrator informs us, at that precise moment, no one expected the spectral form which appeared behind the spiritualist. There isn't one. "Mumbo jumbo, mass hysteria or evidence of forces occupying the invisible world around and/or within us?" Narrated by John Carradine, some versions of the film included the old exploitation gimmick of ringing chimes on the soundtrack, heralding and concluding more repellent sequences.

Jacopetti and Prosperi hit upon *Mondo Candido* in 1975. Antonio Climati and Mario Morra were another collaborative team, and *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, that same year, was their first collaborative effort. "Something is always dying and something is always being born," comments the narrator. With sequences culled from around the world, *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* may have been a return to the encyclopedic mondo cinema of the early 60s, but here was an overt nastiness, typified in an abundance of animal slaughter (much of which is repeated in slow motion). Other sequences, whether they be faked or not, seem nothing more than a test of viewer staying power. Notes precede two climactic sequences. In one, a man is attacked and devoured by lions. Another depicts mercenaries capturing Indians; shooting, mutilating and castrating them. The passage is truly devastating but manages to conclude with a happy refrain from the title song: "If we take/The harmony/That is the breeze/That stirs the trees." The *MFB* note:

The inclusion of a grainy, 16mm record of an Indian massacre is a brutal reminder of the off-hand ease with which we are capable

of killing each other; but to follow it with a sentimental song about joy in the "harmony" of nature, and a spurious sequence in which a wolf licks a man's hand, effectively undermines any intended moral and reveals the film to be just another thinly disguised sensational exploiter.

Produced, directed and written by Robert Emenegger and Allan Sandler, *Death: The Ultimate Mystery* [1975] is just one of 'The Gamma Chronicles', a series of films purporting to challenge "the unknown, the unexplored, the uncharted."<sup>11</sup> Like the other Chronicles, it is horribly dull and consists of interminable conversations and speculation. Cameron Mitchell narrates whilst driving around in his car, looking out of the window. "There was one photo that fascinated me," he reminisces on his childhood and the work of his photo journalist father. A black and white image fills the screen of a soldier crouching alongside another man. Face down, the figure has a gaping cavity in his head from which his brains spill. As Mitchell attempts to come to grips with his fascination, the image of the decimated head takes up more and more of the screen. "Death . . . what is this silent conspiracy of nature that keeps us from knowing what it's all about?" His pontificating takes Mitchell to a Los Angeles psychologist. "Now hang on a dang minute," he retorts at some particularly unsatisfactory answer. The psychologist refers him to one Dr. Armstrong, a retired



Mexican mummy.

Surgeon General of the USAF. And so it goes. From museum curators to hypnotherapists, from doctors to gurus . . . all pontificating. By far the most interesting sequence is that where Mitchell visits the mummies of Guanajuato, Mexico. Here, in the cemetery, if relatives cannot afford to pay for the grave site after an initial five years, the body of the deceased is exhumed and propped against a wall in the vault. The bodies are well preserved, still retaining eyes, hair, and flesh. The caretaker at the entrance to the crypt addresses the viewer, "You are the American that wanted to see the mummies? Okay, come with me." A red-haired, bearded Mitchell punctuates the caretaker's dialogue – and the many other people he meets – with "Interesting" or "I see . . ." but it isn't until the picture is over that it suddenly dawns: Cameron Mitchell *wasn't actually in it!* It may be his name on the credits and his voice on the soundtrack, but that bearded gentleman wandering around is *not* Mitchell. Indeed, the filmmakers go to ludicrous lengths to hide the fact and convince the viewer otherwise: forced camera angles (ie. from a distant corner of the room, from the topmost corner of the room, from behind 'Cameron's' foot); by placing 'him' in shadow; by hiding 'him' behind an object (with just his knees sticking out from behind, say, a Guanajuato mummy); by putting just the tufts of 'his' beard in the frame, and so on.

Romano Vanderbes released *This is America* in 1976.<sup>12</sup> Also largely known as *Jabberwalk*, it promised glimpses of a new-look America while resorting to images of well-worn territory, such as



**He was a preacher –  
a prophet. He led  
over 900 people  
to self-  
destruction.  
His name was  
Jim Jones,  
his kingdom  
the People's  
Temple.**

*Unknown Powers artwork after the Jonestown massacre.*

male go-go dancers, demolition derbies, massage parlours, devastation at the Indianapolis race track and sex boutiques. *This is America* was popular enough to instigate a series, with Vanderbes going on to direct parts *II* and *III*.

Bruno Mattei, under the alias Jimmy Matheus, directed *Le Notti Porno Nel Mondo/Mondo Erotico* in 1977, an account of sex clubs throughout the world; their specialisations, fetishes, and general practices. Joe D'Amato made a *Le Notti Porno Nel Mondo No. 2* the following year.

Don Como's *Unknown Powers* [1978] utilized a host of celebrity names to detail stories of the paranormal. Because of a brief clip of Reverend Jim Jones, this largely dull film was catapulted into unexpected success when Jones inaugurated murder and mass suicide in Guyana the year of its release (before the massacre, the original ad artwork for *Unknown Powers* had no reference to Jones). Also in 1978, *This Violent World* was the second collaboration between Antonio Climati and Mario Morra. After easing the audience in with quaint scenes of children, dogs, and married couples, descending from their isolated mountaintop village via rope and pulley, a shift of location takes the viewer down a street of penitents, fakirs and beggars. Admittedly not the most original of mondo opening moments – that is, until one of the fakirs sticks out his tongue for the camera, takes a knife and slices the muscle clean off. In another sequence, a man faces execution by firing squad. The whirring of the camera on the soundtrack attempts to lend some semblance of credibility to the



Indian fakir from *This Violent World*.

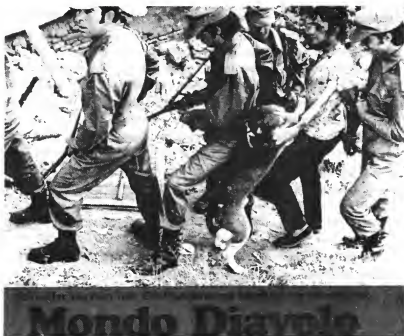
faked sequence. That same year, Angelo and Alfredo Castiglioni's *Addio Ultimo Uomo* [1978], saw African natives giving chase to a man from another village. The natives bring the man down to the ground, where they spear and castrate him. The scene bares a remarkable similarity to the Indian massacre in Climati/Morra's *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, but its brutalities are that much more sober, and therefore that much more convincing.

Charles E. Sellier Jr. and James L. Conway produced *Encounter with Disaster* [1979], a compilation of tragedy footage depicting aircrashes, earthquakes, tornados, and so on. A burning towerblock in Sao Paulo ejects its residents from the topmost floors. The dramatic music intensifies each time a body falls to the road below. Ships collide at sea, dams collapse, and the Hindenburg burns in America. The documentary concludes with an aircrash in which all the passengers survive, offering some needed relief to the pummeled cinema audience.

Vincent Price, along with a multitude of garish suits, closed the decade with *Days of Fury* [1979]. Perched upon a rocky shoreline, Price relates that "Inevitably cars crash and men die . . . *horribly*" as racing cars and motorcycles careen off circuits. Just one of the things, it seems, that's wrong with the world. In another suit at another locale, Price ponders "The wheels of the world are turned by oil," thus providing a perilous link between the sporting disasters and footage of crude oil spillage and contaminated shorelines. Directed by Fred Warshofsky, other furies include forest fires, airplane crashes, raging seas, volcanic eruptions, and footage of the killing of Bill Stewart, a journalist in Nicaragua.

As the mondo genre progressed across three decades of political change, escalating violence and sexual liberation, the shock footage became all-too accessible and increasingly repulsive. Sometimes obviously faked. Sometimes disturbingly real. Occasionally, disclaimers preceded the opening credits suggesting that the movie about to be viewed was produced for an academic audience. This assertion of *education* rather than *exploitation* was all too mendacious. Mondo was – and still is – produced simply to capitalize on the instinctive desire to view the forbidden and not, as often postulated, to enlighten.<sup>13</sup>

With the likes of the Castiglioni brothers, or Climati and Morra



Prelude to execution . . . *This Violent World*.

at the helm, more than ever was it evident that the sexual and violent attributes of the documentaries – or, more appropriately, “shockumentaries” as they came to be known – were the most popular and memorable sequences. Although these four Italians were keeping the tradition of *Mondo Cane* alive in acquiring and compiling footage from the four-corners of the globe their work between 1975 and the mid-80s is the most incestuous, convoluted and confusing of the whole genre. The success of Climati and Morra’s *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* [1975] inaugurated the ‘savage’ trilogy. Depending upon which theatre you were frequenting at the time, the second entry into this trilogy could either be *Savage World* [1978] or any one of the following: *Savage Man Savage Beast Part 2*, *This Violent World*, *Mondo Diavolo*, *Savanna Violenta*. . . Though the same picture, the differing titles often meant a differing sequence of events, very often with some scenes missing altogether. No exception was the final instalment of the series, *Sweet and Savage* [1983], which, despite the inclusion of several new sequences, looked to be little more than a

LA VERDAD QUE EL CINE NO SE ATREVIO A FILMAR

ALESSANDRO FRACASSI  
presenta



# MUNDO DULCE y CRUEL



un film de ANTONIO CLIMATI-MARIO MORRA

scenarij e direzzjone ANTONIO CLIMATI MARIO MORRA

musica composta e arrangiata DANIELE PATUCCHI

*Sweet and Savage.*

refresher course of the previous two entries. To make matters more confusing, when Climati and Morra went their separate ways, Morra directed a *Savage Zone*.



If it wasn't enough that Climati and Morra were borrowing heavily from their own stockpile, rival filmmakers Angelo and Alfredo Castiglioni saw fit to retitle their *Addio Ultimo Uomo* as *The Last Savage*, and their *Shocking Africa* as *The Last Savage Part II*.

Amongst themselves, the four filmmakers were 'reassembling' the more interesting and commercial aspects of each preceding picture. With the talking point of *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* being the Indians who are seen castrated, scalped and decapitated, snuff became a commercially viable ploy. *Addio Ultimo Uomo* did little more than change the setting and circumstance for their killing of an African, while in *Sweet and Savage* a twist came in the *modus operandi* – a man tied between moving vehicles and torn apart. (Released in Japan as *Caramba!*, the image of a man having his arm wrenched off was central to the advertising campaign.)

Come the 1980s, the mondo films of Morra, Climati, and the Castiglioni brothers were all but over. Indeed, the mondo 'encyclopedic world overview' was all but over. It would drag its feet for a couple more years and then succumb to the next shocks. Harsh reality was muscling in and it was proving increasingly difficult to out-mondo the daily news on television, or death-dealing mondo TV series like *Havoc* [1978]. As with each mondo era before it, the 'savage' series had to – at the very least – keep up with the times. Preferably, it was stronger, stranger, more depraved and shocking than life. If orangutans, aerobics, sentimental asides and whimsy had once proven a breathing space between sex and horror, the new mondo dawning was about to choke the audience on viscera or vice.

The most obvious change in mondo came with the segregation of sex and violence. Sex was waning, easily accessible in hardcore feature films, and already quite superfluous to the 'savage' pictures, but a film called *Faces of Death* ensured that the paths of sex and death would rarely cross by the mid-80s. With fewer and fewer exceptions, these two themes – once integral – would subdivide and stand apart. Claudio Racca's sexually deviant *Love* and the stomach-turning death-obsessive series, *The Shocks*, are typical examples of this sequestration.

Sex became a focus for the mondo film following Erich F. Bender's *Helga* in 1967, a dramatised documentary made under the auspices of the German Ministry of Health. It pertained to educate people



worldwide in matters of sex with vox pop interviews, elementary lessons in biology, and micro-photography of an embryo and foetus. Much like the road show pictures of the 1940s – such as *Mom and Dad* – it wrapped its ‘facts’ around a storyline, concluding with the eponymous central character herself actually giving birth. Many such dramatised and educational sex documentaries followed, including, from Germany: Joachim Mock, Rubin Sharon and Jorg Van Encke’s *Intim-Report* [1967],<sup>14</sup> F.J. Gottlieb’s *The Wonder of Love* [1967], its sequels *Sexual Partnership* [1968] and *Female Sexuality* [1968], and Erich F. Bender’s *Michael and Helga* [1968]. From Britain came: Elkan Allan’s *Love In Our Time* [1968], Derek Ford’s *The Wife Swappers* [1969], Terry Gould’s *Love Variations* [1969], and Hermann Schnell’s *Anatomy of Love* [1969]. From Italy came: Vittorio De Sisti’s *Naked England*, Marcello Avallone’s *The Queer . . . The Erotic*, Sergio Martino’s *Mondo Sex*, and Alfonso Brescia’s *Labyrinth of Sex* [1969] (which showed the sex act performed under laboratory conditions; the premise being that sex is best understood through a study of its deviations).

From France, Jean-Claude Roy’s nine-part inquiry, *Secret French*

*Prostitution Report* [1969], saw some rather suspect-looking police, social workers and hookers airing their views on the oldest profession in the world. Sections such as 'Adolescent Prostitution' and 'Rehabilitation' are obviously contrived set-pieces, with the last part – 'White Slavery' – being perhaps the only genuine sequence in the picture. Here, the commentary informs that, although white slavery is in decline today, women are only too susceptible when faced with better job prospects. To demonstrate this, the filmmakers have placed an ad in a newspaper: *actresses wanted for film work*. Setting up interviews with the applicants, a hidden camera records how easy it is for women to sign their life away. The chain-smoking interviewer asks each of the girls in turn if they are willing to work abroad. They are. Are they shy? They're not. Could they show him their breasts? They can. And so on – with one of the girls going so far as to take off her skirt ("There is a desk between us, encourages the interviewer). Few of the girls question the open-contract that is placed before them.

In October of 1969, Torgny Wickman's *Language of Love* was seized by American customs as 'obscene'. From Sweden, "not about sex . . . but a film about being together," *Language of Love* managed to cause quite a furore on both sides of the Atlantic with its markedly more explicit form of sexual instruction. In Britain, it was initially refused a certificate, but the BBFC reconsidered its decision and granted it an 'X'. The film is centred around four academics sitting on a sofa, whose conversation prompts a series of vignettes. Illustrating such matters as 'Difficulty in Communicating' and 'Intolerance', the group's down-to-earth approach and insistence that sex is a glorious thing that everyone ought to discuss openly, has unintentional humour when viewed today (possibly unintentional humour when viewed outside of Sweden). In one sketch, a dinner host remarking "That'll be one of our tractors going by," followed by his wife's retort, "We have one *single* tractor, darling," is a rather sumptuous example of 'Disparaging the Man's Virility'. Wickman also directed *More About the Language of Love*, and *Language of Love Part III*.

It wasn't until 1972 and the release of *Deep Throat*, that filmmakers deemed it safe to use hardcore pornography in commercial feature films for entertainment, as opposed to utilizing it in 'documentaries' for 'instruction'. The brief years between

*Language of Love* and *Deep Throat*, therefore, were host to a curious hybrid of fact, fiction and fucking. Typical of this hybrid was Milton Vikkers and Betsy Moss' *Pornography in New York* [1970]. Here, a certain Ron Delaney leads his crack team of reporters in search of the "porno explosion" in New York City "where it's happening today." The great fuzz guitar score might be a bonus, but the constant throbbing psychedelic montages and heavy reverb vocals that spell out the movie's title with numbing frequency, are antiquated even by late-60s' standards. So, too, the hip-speak: "Everyone's been talkin' that sex is a scene. To me, America's obscene and should be rated X." Perhaps the filmmakers are every bit as hip to the scene as Delaney looks. That is, not at all. In his pin-striped suit and tie, Delaney walks into a store selling SM paraphernalia and, thrusting his microphone forward, says to the guy there, "Hi, I'm looking for something . . . *special*."

Similar were *Sex and Astrology* [1970], a product of the 'Institute for Adult Education', and Alex De Rezny's *Sexual Encounter Group* [1970]. With Denmark being the first country to totally abolish film censorship, it was natural that M.C. Von Hellen (De Rezny again, under a pseudonym) should want to bring to New York *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* [1970]; 'Karl Hansen' demonstrated methods of foreplay, sexual intercourse and oral sex in his look at *Sexual Practices in Sweden* [1970]; while Pat Rocco's *Sex and the Single Gay* [1970], included scenes of men making love, an interview with a man discussing his pending sex-change operation



(who then runs through the woods dressed in feminine clothing), and a card game in which the players' clothing disappears resulting in a group orgy. Rocco also composed the theme song *Changes*, and directed *Mondo Rocco* the same year, a film compiled of gay shorts and female impersonators.

"Once these graphic sexual elements were presented," states Arthur Lenning in *Sexuality in the Movies* "it was only a matter of time before more sex and less talk would get by." With the arrival of *Deep Throat*, hardcore sex education pretty much dried-up overnight. And viewers, determined Lenning, "would have to live without the benefit of the learned voices and derive the educational message from the bouncing images alone."

Possibly the last of the true sex mondo pictures to date are David Adnopaz's *Mondo Sexualis USA* [1985], and Antonio D'Agostino's *Noi E L'Amore: Comportamento Sessuale Deviante* [198-]. The former has interviews with editor of *Screw* magazine, Al Goldstein, and ex-porn queen Gloria Leonard. Other moments include SM nightclubs, tattooing, transvestism, genital depilation, pin-up girls and a sex-change operation. While *Noi E L'Amore* is based – as only mondo films can be based – on the principle works of Sigmund Freud, Krafft-Ebing, Sacher-Masoch and De Sade. Also known affectionately as 'Mutant Sexual Behaviour', *Noi E L'Amore* has a young doctor sitting at his desk, detailing the many permutations of sexual anomaly. He introduces several unusual relationships, intercut with interviews. A transsexual is shown. A woman becomes aroused watching her manservant lick envelopes. A man pays a prostitute and begs for the woman – who is laughing hysterically – to urinate over him. A lonely spinster watches horses mating from her window (in her underwear), and encourages her pet dog to lap at her vagina. A woman resting on a park bench has one of her red shoes stolen by a shoe fetishist. A woman arrives home to catch her husband trying on her underwear. A woman arrives home to catch her husband in bed with another man. A warning flashes on the screen and grainy film of a sex-change operation commences.

As a separate entity, sex had limited 'shockumentary' potential. Somehow, the sight of a man licking envelopes, didn't fire the public imagination half as much as a man falling from a burning building to his death. The ultimate sexual deviation would seem to be the sex-

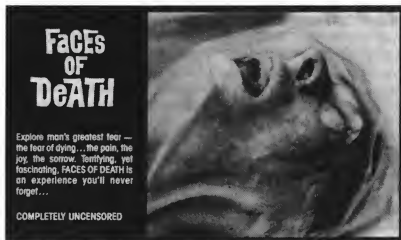
change operation. *Shocking Asia*, *Love, Let Me Die a Woman*, *Mondo Sexualis USA*, and *Noi E L'Amore* had all done it, as will *Nude and Crude* and *Mondo Cane Oggi* to follow. Given that there is only so much a filmmaker can do with footage of a scalpel cutting through genitalia, and that certain obscenity laws do exist, it isn't surprising that the sex shockumentary is such a limited commodity – and that the likes of *Mondo Sexualis USA* and *Noi E L'Amore* are as shocking as they are because they are so few and far between.

Which leaves 'death'. In the 1980s, video technology and an accumulation of mondo titles saw an increase in genuine disaster and violence footage; footage acquired by TV newshounds and the like. Often relentless and sickening, the mondo compendium became a parade of fatalities. But the sheer volume of death wasn't the only measure of this new documentary; there was also a marked shift away from animal slaughter to that of human butchery and carnage. It seemed that a camera was on hand the moment anything ever went wrong, whether it be a failing parachute or successful suicide, victim of natural disaster or fast food kill spree.

As with the lion attack in *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, such brutal effrontery was no longer isolated enough an instance to warrant a forwarding note of explanation, nor for the soundtrack to be kept in silent reverence. The pitiful sight of human suffering and despair,



Ganges debris from *Shocking Asia*.



travesty and folly, had become the norm for the new shockumentary. If mondo could be criticised for combining fact and fancy and negating the difference, it should have appeased critics to see the genre moving along a more discernable path. Not so. More factual the documentaries may have become, but at the expense of being strange and alluring.

"Prepare yourself for a journey," warns Frances B. Gröss, the gangling pathologist at the opening of *Faces of Death*. "A journey into a world where each new step may give you a better understanding of your own reality." Of course, he's about as convincing as the hallway and kitchen that double as his surgery and lab. And the film every bit as sincere and genuine as the brash publicity notes would imply:

*Faces of Death* has been in production for the past three years. Camera crews have spanned the globe capturing the most grotesque and bizarre experiences which answer the unasked questions we've always had about death.

Whether fighting strange tropical diseases or dealing with America's illegal death cults, our cinematographic experts have placed themselves in dangerous conditions in order to bring to the screen the ultimate exposé on death.

Since death occurs at any time, our various camera units around the world maintained a twenty-four hour active schedule. As a

result, *Faces of Death* contains some of the most graphic footage ever recorded on film.

The talent that composed the staff of this motion picture could have been hired by the United Nations. Fifteen different countries are represented by our crew, making this picture an international event. Now for the first time in cinematic [sic] history, the living around the world will witness the world of the dead.

Few knew, and fewer still cared, whether Gröss was an imposter (in the credits his name varies in spelling) – *Faces of Death* was a flop at the US box office. Made in 1979 for the Japanese market, following its phenomenal success over there, Aquarius picked the film up for distribution in the United States and released it theatrically in 1981.<sup>15</sup> But its unyielding view of human suffering – that much more intense without the distraction of topless beauties – proved too daunting even for the ‘grindhouse’ crowds. Footage of open heart surgery, autopsies, an alligator attacking a game warden, victims of a spree killer, a young woman leaping from a sixth story window, a sky-dive with a failing parachute, automobile accidents, airplane accidents, train collisions and executions. Back-to-back, real or faked, such discordant imagery wouldn’t tolerate the kind of yelling, cheering 42nd Street audience participation that accompanied the likes of *Shocking Asia* or *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*. Strange then, that it should prove one of the all-time top rental hits when released onto video by MPI. (The most contentious sequence – that depicting fresh monkey brains being served as a delicacy in a fancy restaurant – was actually pre-dated by as much as 15-years in the Japanese mondo *Spots in the Sun*.)

Most all the names associated with the production are pseudonyms, despite what the distribution notes provided by Telecas Japan claim:

- Dr. Frances B. Gröss: . . . *Not only has he worked as a county coroner, but besides, the Doctor is in the middle of compiling a biography of his experiences of death that he has seen during his lifetime.*
- Rosilyn T. Scott (producer): . . . *Prior to this she has worked on several documentaries and docu-dramas as both associate producer and production manager.*
- Alan Black (writer): *Mr. Black has been associated with Dr. Gröss for the past five years. Aside from assisting the doctor with his forth-*





*Faces of Death.*

coming book, Mr. Black has worked as a 'film doctor' for numerous movies throughout the world. He is a man who has forgone credit on many pictures, because he prides himself as being the idea man. The man who can take a weak picture and make it a success. Faces of Death is the first feature in which he has granted the use of his name.

- Gene Kauer (music): Born in Germany and recognized as a musical genius at an early age, Mr. Kauer has composed and conducted the music for many major pictures out of Hollywood. He records his compositions with some of the masters of the musical world.
- Michael Golden (dir. of photography, American unit): Michael

*Golden is a leading cinematographer in the United States . . . He is best known for his dramatic hand-held camera techniques often used under situations of great danger where he risked his own life.*

- William B. James (executive producer): . . . *He is particularly enthused about this project because it will expose the masses to a reality they have never experienced.*

- Conan Le Cilaire (director): *A young and dynamic director Mr. Le Cilaire has directed adventure stories from diving to scalling [sic] mountains. He is a man with a great love of celluloid. The intensity of Faces of Death will no doubt place him in a league all his own amongst his associates in the film world.*

What are these adventure stories of Le Cilaire's? Why is Mr. Black so elusive about his past ideas? What are the titles of Rosilyn T. Scott's earlier docu-dramas and documentaries? Where are these major pictures out of Hollywood that musical genius Kauer has worked so exhaustively on? Could it be perhaps, that *Faces of Death* was made by a Japanese crew?

Whoever it was, their inspiration seems to have been that rather dull investigation of 1975: *Death: The Ultimate Mystery*. The parallels between the two pictures run uncomfortably close to be simple coincidence. For instance, both films are guided by a lone figure on a journey of self-discovery (with Francis B. Gröss it is "a compulsion to understand"; Cameron Mitchell can but "wonder what it's all about"); each player has been motivated by forces beyond their



Alligator attack. Promotional shot from *Faces of Death*.

understanding (with Gröss it is the recurring dream of a funeral; Mitchell has had an out of body experience and was witness to his own funeral); and both start their journeys with the mummies of Guanajuato, Mexico. Looking at the petrified figures, intones Mitchell, "They're the beginning of a new life." Decides Gröss, "I had a feeling that each one had a different story to tell about their own death."

Because of the success of *Faces of Death* in Japan and its new found popularity on the US video market, sequels weren't long in coming. *Faces of Death II* [1981] treaded much the same path as its predecessor, but wallows in a truly reprehensible smugness. Death is paraded thick and fast, with commentary so imbecilic that the first film looks positively insightful by comparison. Air disasters and train derailments, bomb blast victims and familiar scenes of napalm-burned children in Vietnam, *F.O.D. II* relies more on actual news footage than it does on staged events. And Gröss looks more than ever like a demented Crypt-Keeper, popping up every few minutes, providing 'opinion' and 'continuity' to the proceedings. A reader's letter to *Video Drive-In!* noted: "... Yeah, we sat down and discussed the comparative worth of both [*Faces of Death*] *I* and *II* and noticed how the good Dr. Frances B. Gröss (wotta name) was poorly dressed in the first one but had a nifty motorcycle and expensive boots in part *II*. We figured out he musta made a mint outta the first one ..."

Credited to the same crew and fronted by the ubiquitous Dr. Gröss, a third instalment, *Faces of Death III* [1985], is almost entirely fake, running like a series of reconstructed episodes from a TV crimeshow. Police give chase to a gang of drug smugglers (in which one smuggler is shot dead); an execution in El Salvador; explosive experts fail to make safe an assassin's bomb; a suicide; a sniper randomly picking off passer-by – all are bogus, all take place within the USA.

In 1989, Gorgon Video released *Worst of Faces of Death*, a direct-to-video compilation made up of footage taken – for the most part – from volumes *I* and *III* (the sequences from the latter volume being in green for some reason). Excepting the animal slaughter, the extracts comprise largely of the bogus moments in the series. Though his voice may be narrating, the visage of Gröss is nowhere to be seen, and a new face – one that stares madly into the camera and fidgets



with a skeletal foot – introduces the tape. “What is death?” it asks. “That is a question my good friend Dr. Frances B. Gröss dedicated his life to answering. Hello, my name is Dr. Louis Flellis. I’m a surgeon. Three weeks ago during a simple operation, Gröss died under *my knife*.”

A year later, in 1990, *Faces of Death IV* saw a return with new material. Again directed by Cilaire, the credits feature several new names, including executive producer Kenzo Kuroda, and co-producers/co-directors, Susumu Saegusa and Andrew Theopolis. Gröss was once more absent, replaced by Dr. Flellis, staring at the camera, eyebrows arched, eyes rolling, hands fumbling. His commentary is even more perverse than that of his predecessor. There is an equal balance of bogus and authentic footage, but where Gröss maintained that his investigations were towards a better understanding, Flellis looks almost to be playing it for laughs. Certainly, that’s what the

closing moments of the picture would indicate. Footage of an orchestra collapsing through a stage has Ffellis stating that the scene motivated him to take up the piano again; more than that, it has inspired him to write a song. As he stares wide-eyed into the camera, a rocking up-tempo number commences:

I believe in children (*death*)  
 I believe in life (*death*)  
 But I'd have to be deaf, dumb and blind  
 Not to see the strife.  
 Chorus: Faces of death, faces of death  
 Faces of death all around me.

The collapsing orchestra footage was actually broadcast on TV news in recent years. As no one was seriously injured, the incident provided the light relief amongst more pressing world matters. However, in *Faces of Death IV*, additional, tagged-on footage depicts mass carnage as a result of the collapse. Musicians lie bloody, dead or limbless. In one shot a severed leg is carried past the camera, and a lifeless face lies by a bloodied trombone.

Because of its mocking sincerity, *Faces of Death IV* has been branded a 'glorification of violence' by German authorities and banned outright in that country. However, in Germany, a *Faces of Death 5* [1991] and *6* [1992] could be found languishing in rental stores. Contrary to their title and packaging, these two parts bear little relation to Le Cilaire's preceding volumes and owe as much to the 'video age' as they do the mondo film. More later.

In 1981 came Sheldon Renan's *The Killing of America*, another export for the Japanese market. Unlike *Faces of Death*, however, the popularity of this picture overseas has yet to earn it a release back in the States. With footage of shoot-outs, assassinations and murder victims being no more appalling than those seen in other productions, its fervent stance for greater gun control would seem to be the only thing keeping this clear-headed, frightening, mondo effort from attaining the release it deserves. Marred only by the protracted tribute to the gunned-down John Lennon which closes the picture.

Again 1981, Harry Rasky's *Being Different* was a look at men and women suffering physical disabilities.

Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni's *Shocking Africa* [1982] had

scenes depicting the chiselling and filing down of teeth ("for purely aesthetic reasons"), the usual slaughter of animals ("a blood sacrifice is called for"), well-hung men jumping up and down in slow motion ("they have no need to cover their bodies"), and young boys hunting vipers ("it's a stroke of luck to find so many together"). In another sequence, the film crew uncover an ancient mass burial site, where artifacts and trinkets are buried along with the bones. As they commence to excavate the area, a snake leaps from a clay pot and bites one of the men. He falls to the floor screaming. The scene is replayed in slow motion. Fortunately for the viewer, "the second camera also filmed this unique scene," and that too is played. Written by Guglielmo Guariglia, 'director of the Institute of Ethology, Milan', *Shocking Africa* is most notable for its truly hideous circumcision scenes, or rather, the sheer *volume* of its circumcision scenes. Early in the picture, boys in a village are held down by their fathers while their foreskin is stretched over a wooden block. A blade is positioned, a mallet brought down and, writhing and screaming, the boy is circumcised. "Nobody may be excused from this moral obligation," warns the narration. It seems that every single boy in the village has been filmed undergoing the transition to manhood, and every single one is being replayed to us. Endlessly, the sight of bloodied, squirming infant genitalia fills the screen. Later, the crew arrive at another village, and are witness to another such ceremony. Finally, as the last minutes of *Shocking Africa* draw in, so too comes the comment "the hour of suffering and rebirth has arrived." Female circumcision. The first of many young girls is positioned on her back in the sand, her legs held wide apart in the air. The narrator back-peddles furiously, "These scenes were not filmed in the interests of sensationalism. They are a record of a horrifying reality that still exists today and cannot be ignored." A heartbeat pounds on the soundtrack as the camera focuses on a razorblade slicing at the first immature clitoris. Another follows, and another, until each girl is done and the ceremony ends. As with the Castiglioni's previous *Addio Ultimo Uomo*, a quotation of Leopold Sengör exonerates the filmmakers:

If man's universal civilisations should be unaware of only one of the customs of its different peoples, mankind will be incomplete and not live in peace.

For the other Italian team, Antonio Climati and Mario Morra, *Sweet and Savage* in 1983 marked the end of their collaborative filmmaking. Some five years after their *This Violent World* and eight years since *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, this concluding part of the 'savage' trilogy utilizes out-takes and sometimes *the same* scenes from those earlier pictures. Gazelle stray into a minefield and are blown up in slow motion. Fox hunting (culled from *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*) is met with the dour response, "It's called sport." Mexicans who chase a deer with slingshot for sport, prompts the observation, "an ancient memory of what they were." But such pointed remarks are muted by excruciating asides like the two playful dolphins "called Honey and Sugar, because they're sweet." A physical workout class has women engaging in sexual thrusts, "sweet and savage." Africans are credited with inventing aerobics, as the often used scene of black men bouncing naked illustrates. Fakirs (from *This Violent World*) pierce their mouths and genitals. A glamour photographer provides an excuse to show the naked female form. A lynx chases a white rabbit through snow and a monologue relates that, however unpleasant the scene, if we root for the rabbit to escape "we are condemning the lynx to starvation." Condor hunters in the Andes cover themselves with sheep entrails and pretend to be dead in order that they may entice the birds down and capture them. "Playing dead in order to live," opines the narrator.

Albert Thomas' *Nude and Crude* [1984] is mondo at its most anaemic. Opening to scenes of childbirth and then veering wildly between a game of football as played by cripples, and pornography for chimpanzees in a zoo, *Nude and Crude* has no discernable correlation at all. Nonsensical pieces such as the man trying a huge strap-on dildo for size in a sex shop (a comical *boiing!* on the soundtrack when the female assistant has to turn it the correct way up), is followed by a penis wrestling match (similar to an arm wrestle with the winner getting the girl), followed by an overcrowded bus service in which the driver hollers "*Duck!*" whenever he notices a road cop. Moments later, there is a reprisal of the alligator sequence from *Faces of Death* in which a man is 'eaten alive'. As if attempting to top the audacity of that preposterous faked sequence, *Nude and Crude* engage their own moment of animal crackers: a car pulls away from a hut in a woodlands clearing. A figure moves from the undergrowth and steals its way to the front door of the building.

'BEWARE – POISONOUS SNAKES' reads the sign on the door. The would-be thief picks the lock and enters. The ensuing disaster looms large, but the *Nude and Crude* filmmakers don't have the time, finance or inclination to show anything beyond the door closing behind the man and a piercing scream permeating from within.

According to the press notes, Mario Morra's solo effort, *Savage Zone* [198-] is:

Man at his most inhuman in a dimension of violence unequalled in the history of motion pictures. The agony of crucifixion, the horror of physical torture, the shock of a behind the scenes look at Brazilian night life. The mutilated body of a murdered transvestite, corpse collecting on the most famous beach in the world, the grisly truth about autopsies.



Domestic prisoner. *Savage Zone*.



But, in truth, the whole thing covered much the same ground as that of Morra's previous collaborations with Climati, except that here it was easy to see who commanded the more sensationalistic elements of those earlier films. Footage of clitoris circumcision and child slavery, of seal culling and dog fights, are presented back-to-back with incredibly inappropriate – and blatantly false – sequences of religious sects that spit, an X-rated magician who pulls a rabbit, a dog and a star-spangled banner from his grinning assistant's vagina instead of a hat, glamour photography in the snow, and a Californian dominatrix who specializes in lesbians. Scenes at a women's rally for battered wives are followed by a naked female bottom at the 'Oui Madame' leisure club. Scenes of penitents in the Philippines being nailed to crucifixes are recorded in startling detail, the camera capturing up-close each thud of hammer on nail. Of course, man's inhumanity toward the animal kingdom is duly observed.

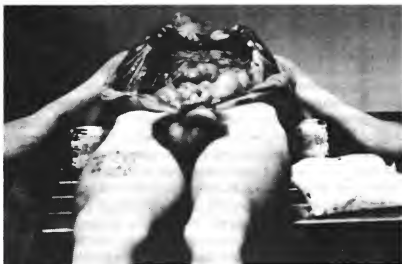
*Bizarre Rituals: Dances Sacred and Profane* [1985] was a look at the world of body art through the eyes of San Franciscan photographer, Charles Gatewood.<sup>16</sup> The interviews in Paula De Koenigsberg and Lucy Winer's *Rate It X* [1985], concerned male opinion as to the image of women in advertising and the media. Frank Heimans' *The Occult Experience* [1985] took aboard fringe religions. With backing by the Australian Film Commission, Heimans' might have sought a serious study, but the magnitude of geekish characters ultimately thwarts the attempt.

The term 'mondo' was back in vogue. Max Steel's *Mondo Cane Oggi: L'Orrore Continua* [198-] opened to the corpse of a small child lying by a roadside as commuters travel nonchalantly about their daily business. Deems the commentary: "man has done wrong to the world and the world has done wrong to the man." A dog fight credit sequence pays homage to the films of Jacopetti and Prosperi. Scenes of a nudist colony, body building and glamour photography are clumsily saddled with contemporary mores such as a sex-change operation ("Voilà!" chides the narrator as the surgeon drops the discarded penis into a wastebin) and drug smuggling. One method of illegal transportation of heroin is hiding the narcotic in the emptied body cavity of a corpse. Another sequence depicts a supposed cure for homosexuality: in a clinic, a young man is strapped in front of a screen showing slides of the naked human form. Arousal at the sight

of anything but the opposite sex, supplies the man with an electric shock to his genitals. Uninspiring as it is, *Mondo Cane Oggi* encouraged yet another late addition to the 'Mondo Cane' cycle: Gabriele Crisanti's *Mondo Cane 2000: L'Incredibile* [1988].

The pre-credit sequence of *Mondo Cane 2000*, depicts a primitive culture and exotic wildlife. The narrator suggests that this paradise has become extinct and "lost forever." (Which would seem a good excuse to avoid having to search it out.) The film opens proper on the streets of America and remains there throughout its duration (consequently resembling Romano Vanderberes' *This is America* more than it does *Mondo Cane*). The first segment depicts a character paying for the privilege of attacking a police car in a scrapyard with a sledge-hammer. The hammer is carried in sections like some high-tech weapon in an attache case. After assembly, it is discreetly substituted for a real sledge-hammer which is swung with vigour into the vehicle. A gay pride march is followed by still photographs of bodies on the sidewalk. Drug abuse and drug smuggling is covered. In direct competition with the previous volume, here erotic slides are not treatment for homosexuality, but a cure for frigid women. Indeed, the sex-change operation has been superseded by a hormone transplant: a dead primate has its testicles extracted. During surgery, the face of a screaming monkey is intercut to give the impression that a live and conscious animal is losing its genitals. Once removed, the testicles go to provide a human male with the required hormones (cue: slicing of more testicles).

Like the woman-suckling-animal – in turn replaced by the requisite castration – scenes of drugs concealed in an eviscerated body have become the copied form. The first mondo film to use this idea was *Mondo Cane Oggi*: a coffin is followed (by a camera mounted on the fork-lift truck) as it is loaded into a light aircraft. Cut to a morgue where a male cadaver is having its autopsy sutures plucked out. When the abdomen is opened, sitting amongst the guts are several sachets of heroin. Unused footage from this sequence later appeared in a German compilation *Gesichter des Todes Teil 5/Faces of Death 5*. Here the episode commenced with the aircraft's take-off being prevented by law enforcement officers. Cut to a morgue where a female cadaver is stripped of its clothing and the autopsy wound is unstitched, again revealing a stash of heroin. An earlier sequence in *Faces of Death 5* depicts the recovery of heroin from the abdomen of



Method of heroin smuggling. *Mondo Gane Oggi*.

a baby (the child's face is constantly turned to the camera). Ruggero Deodato previously utilised a 'dead infant' for a drug smuggling scenario in his 1985 feature film *Cut and Run*.

*Les Interdits Du Monde* [198-], a film by Chantal Lasbats, managed to infuse a rather vacuous sight-seeing trip around the world with an attractive French look. The editing is snappy, the soundtrack often pleasing, and the conservative use of narrative makes a welcome change (surprisingly, commentary is provided by a woman throughout), but the subject matter offers little new. Sequences such as a Voodoo ceremony in Brazil, penitents actually being nailed to a cross, and show-girls who draw on cigarettes placed in their vagina, may be shot with flair but are overly familiar nonetheless. Bogus instances are provided by a fussy female client at a brothel, and a couple who have sex in a city morgue beside a fresh cadaver.

Other films to have snapped up the mondo moniker include: Thomas Corboy's *Mondo Elvis* [1984]; *Mondo Lugosi* [198-]; Jim Conrad's 15-minute *Mondo Texas* [1991]; and Harvey Keith's *Mondo New York* [1988]. The latter comes over like a contemporary *World by Night*, stalking burlesque in the clubs of New York and featuring underground personalities and performance artists. *Mondo Beyondo* [1988] was more a parody of satellite broadcasting, and starred Bette



Method of heroin smuggling. *Faces of Death* 5.

Midler as a brainless host of a cable TV station introducing some truly awful performance art.

Chris Gore, editor of *Film Threat* magazine, compiled *Cathode Fuck* and *TV Sphincter* in 1986 and 1987 respectively – media barrage tapes consisting of a McDonald's staff training film, a rattlesnake convention in Detroit, a gynaecology exam, TV appearances by The Clash and Public Image Ltd. as well as R. Budd Dwyer shooting himself live on air. Sold through his magazine, the tapes were fast, furious, and offensive. Although they shared the same antagonist attitude of *Faces of Death* and the 'savage' films, they differed in that here the trite commentary was gone; *Cathode Fuck* and *TV Sphincter* had no soul-wrenching sentimental slush, no flippant asides, no mock concern, no sympathetic conceit. Cut-ups culled from numerous sources – not least of all taped from television – both were a reaction to the very medium they employed: Video.

By the latter half of the 1980s, video technology had instigated many changes in film. Not only were old titles being exhumed in a bid for more product (mondo was just another genre to be dragged), but also the accessibility and ease with which the video medium could be manipulated created *its own movies*.

It was a German business man, Uwe Schier, who bought the rights to the title 'Faces of Death' at the beginning of 1990. Under Schier's management, the series veered away from Le Cilaire's original vision and mutated into a rather soulless collection of outrage. A staggering feeling of *déjà vu* grips the viewer whilst watching these recent volumes – not surprising considering that much of the footage is lifted from already accessible sources. Even the musical soundtrack



originally accompanying the pilfered footage has been left intact (any additional musical accompaniment is instantly recognisable, being some popular classical piece or other).

With its computer generated title, *Faces of Death 5* opens with an anti-drug message. It volunteers that the film has been made and completed against all adversity and if it stops just one person from turning to drugs, it will consider its job done. But, seeing as the introduction has little to do with the film beyond this opening segment – and is written in English while the film itself is not available outside of Germany – it is unlikely that the blurb is referring to *Faces of Death 5*. In the same way that the closing credits (which attribute Wesley Emerson as director, Anthony R. Lovett as writer and Bruce J. Kelton as producer) may be a bona fide list of credits, but not one pertaining to this picture. A good percentage of *Faces of Death 5* is taken up with footage from Nick Bougas' *Death Scenes* [1989]. Other footage includes JFK's assassination; the exhumation of corpses in Matamoros, Mexico; troubles in Northern Ireland; troubles in South Africa; folk in a burning hotel leaping to their deaths; endless scenes of air disasters (many of which are played over again in slow motion); murder of a cashier recorded on a supermarket video camera; gang wars in the US; napalmed children in Vietnam. None of it faked.

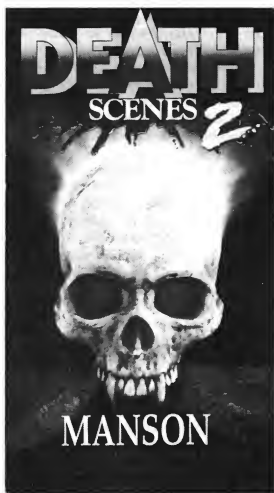
Schier's *Faces of Death 6*, the following year, opens to riot footage. With scenes of a demonstration in the 60s, the commentary determines that riots have become more violent today. Should the viewer then reach for their VCR, hitting the Fast Forward to skip familiar sequences lifted from Fred Warshofsky's 1979 picture, *Days of Fury*, it might come as a bit of a shock to discover that when *Days of Fury* is finally over, so too is *Faces of Death 6*. Warshofsky's film is played here almost in its entirety, with the scenes of Vincent Price edited out. The addition of State Treasurer Dwyer's live on-air suicide caps the lot off. The only thing of interest here – other than sheer audacity – is the way in which *Days of Fury* has become that much more brutal without the rhetoric and recess provided by Price. No credits.

Schier also owns the rights to 'Mondo Cane' and is free to utilize that title in any form he pleases. His *Mondo Cane IV* [1992], despite being chronologically incorrect, is also more akin to his own *Faces of Death* episodes than the original Mondo Cane cycle. Again

no credits, *Mondo Cane IV* opens to another lengthy sequence culled from *Death Scenes*. An intriguing newsreel sequence commences with the title *Chinese Justice* and depicts the cold manner in which condemned Chinese drug peddlers met their fate: on their knees, with a single bullet to the back of the head. The footage carries the credit 'produced and narrated by Mink De Ronda'. A lengthy part of the picture is taken up with the execution of war criminals. The whole film ends on the same footage as Schier's *Faces of Death 5*: Vietnamese trying to escape the napalm dropped on their village. The only moment of *Mondo Cane IV* that *hasn't* been lifted from some other source is the opening scene, in which somebody's pet snake swallows the various live rodents thrown into its tank.

Schier's *Mondo Cane V* [1993], contains highlights from *Shocking Africa* and *Addio Ultimo Uomo*.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, *Inhumanities* and *Inhumanities Part II: Modern Atrocities* [both 1989] are compiled from existing films – mostly badly duped sequences from Italian mondo and cannibal pictures – and are passed off as new product. Of the former instalment, *Slimetime* says "Lots of shots of animals eating each other (what an inhumanity that is!) . . . If you see this at your local video store, don't waste your money – the director certainly didn't." In the years between Le Cilaire's *Faces of Death III* and *Faces of Death IV*, enterprising Deluxe Movies Video jumped in with *Death Faces IV* [1988]. Packaged to look exactly like a bona fide entry into the *F.O.D.* series, *Death Faces IV*<sup>18</sup> contains tired and worn, poorly dubbed, badly edited, fifth-generation copy of Nazi concentration camp footage, sporting accidents, the execution of Chinese dope peddlers and the New Guinea scarification footage (later to find their way into Uwe Schier's *Mondo Cane IV*). Greg Goodsell says of it all, "The sorriest sack of shit available to the home video market imaginable. You take it back to the shop in a huff. Then again, who's gonna be sympathetic to somebody who feels cheated for not seeing people getting offed?" The team responsible for *Death Faces IV* attempted to milk the same market with *Faces of Torture* [1989], another compilation of aged news footage and archive material, more stupid than ugly but torturous to sit through nevertheless. *Keeping People Alive* [1987] and *News Nightmares* [199-] are lower budget 'custom-assembled' selections of uncut tragic news clips. Amok bookshop secured a greater diversity of traumatic



imagery, mixed in with snippets of old cartoons and TV shows, for the release of their *Assault Video* in 1989.

The most incredible thing about *The Shocks* series from Japan was that, prior to distribution on video, it received a theatrical release in its country of origin. Despite having less of a tendency to wallow in overly familiar footage, *The Shocks* is nothing but a collection of horrific news footage graced with higher production values than the previous compilations. Its fusion of newsreels depicting disaster,



traffic accidents, murder, and suicides are harrowing enough to make brief sittings over a period of time advisable. A ray of hope is proffered by the closing song. "We have the gift of love within our hand . . ." Alas it was to be a short respite, and *The Shocks II* through to *IV* were soon to follow.

Few documentaries of recent years have even attempted to be anything other than assimilation of real gore and despair. The only pictures that have challenged this new order are *True Gore* and *Death Scenes*. Although parading death before the camera, both films try and exercise qualities beyond that of quick-fire abhorrence.

Matthew Causey's *True Gore* [1987] is *Faces of Death* if Dr. Gröss had come from a background of performance art. An anonymous individual claims that death is an eventuality we all must face. Death camp liberation film is interspersed with Hitler's own inflamed babbling (scenes lifted from *Triumph of the Will*). Animal experimentation film, autopsy procedure, comparisons between the Black Death and AIDS – all are monitored by the guy in sun glasses.

Nick Bougas' *Death Scenes* [1988] is a compendium of stark, shocking police crime photos, circa 1930s and 40s Los Angeles. The uncensored snaps are rattled off with swift – if spluttering – deftness. Guts are spilled and splashed across each frame as a result of shoot-outs, stabbings, suicides, and accidents.

A return to a more traditional form, however, is Bougas' *Death Scenes II* [1992]. With its forging together of clippings and archive materials, it claims to usher the "brave and curious into a spellbinding trip through the reality that is our world today"; while granting them Dwyer's on-camera suicide, the death of actor Vic Morrow on the set of the *Twilight Zone* movie, a look at Mexican Death Magazines, war atrocities in Europe and Vietnam, public executions, international terrorism and full-colour crime scenes of the Manson Family victims.

More factual have the documentaries become, but at the expense of being strange and alluring. . . With the dawn of the 1990s, it appears that fewer mondo filmmakers are willing to take their camera and travel the globe in search of the mysterious or outrageous – nor even to bother *implying* that they are travelling the globe. Indeed, mondo filmmakers of the Jacopetti and Propseri age have all but been replaced by video technicians, editors – most anyone with a dual

VCR. What's more, extreme visuals, bloody murder and footage of paramedics keeping people alive appears to have gone full circle. Such imagery, much of which is culled from TV news reports, has found its way back onto the box as entertainment. Satellite, cable and 'Reality' TV is now an outlet for independently produced shock footage. Programmes like *I Witness Video* air the murder of a policeman recorded on an in-vehicle video camera, victims of the Air Florida plane crash being pulled from the ice-covered Potomac River and other such scenes. The programme encourages viewers to send in any videotaped sequences of auto accidents, catastrophes, and killings. And the presenter, against a bank of TV screens, handles the programme like any regular game-show host might.

In the 1990s, no longer do the mondo compilers feel obliged to provide an engaging monologue with their scenes of destruction, nor feel they have to hide themselves beneath a swathe of historical context or an engaging explanation. The facade that these films were providing an entertaining and enlightening spectacle had, by the 90s, dissipated under the sheer magnitude of what it was they deemed to show and focus upon: Death. If people had originally suspended their disbelief for the investigative sex 'exposés' of say, *Libidomania*<sup>19</sup> in the 1970s, by the 1990s there was no need. Sex mondo had become hardcore feature films. The mondo franchise lay now with killing or being killed.

INTRA FILMS



# SAVAGE ZONE

*see! see!! a man actually eaten alive. . .*

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## 5. Death in Mondo Film

People, it seemed, were dying for the mondo genre as early as 1963 with Quang Duc's immolation in *Mondo Cane 2*. In 1975, *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* would include in its miscellany Super-8 footage of a man being eaten alive by lions in a safari park, and similar stock of mercenaries hunting and butchering South American Indians. Later, *Addio Ultimo Uomo* offered close-up mutilation, castration, and murder. Hardcore violence became the norm; a necessary element for a successful production. Whether the footage was fake or real didn't concern the paying public; the producers of the films traded the violence as genuine and the punters accepted it as such.

Although most of the sequences involving killings were fabricated, the filmmakers attempted to make distinguishing fake from fact as difficult as possible. Ambiguous messages would sometimes precede a particular violent scene. However, these vague notes were more likely added to act as a legal safety valve for the producers

rather than informative leaders for the viewers. Scenes of slaughter were re-enacted with alarming verisimilitude. So convincing in fact, one wonders why the original footage the sequence was supposedly reconstructed from wasn't shown in the first instance. Photography deliberately grainy, camera deliberately unsteady, characters deliberately nondescript. All in all there was a legitimate market for on-screen murder. Killing for culture was big, profitable business. And as each subsequent film attempted to out-gross its predecessor – both fiscally and visually – the mondo genre would seem to have been progressing towards snuff cinema. At least, in the mondo cinema's meticulously vivid simulation, there existed the axiom of snuff: commercial death.

Here follow key works in the exposition of death.

## *Mondo Cane* ~ 1962

Gualtiero Jacopetti, Paolo Cavara & Franco Prosperi

All the scenes that you are about to see are real and were shot as they were taking place. If sometimes they seem cruel it is only because cruelty abounds on this planet. And anyway, the duty of the reporter is not to make the truth seem sweeter but to show things how they really are.

So proclaimed Gualtiero Jacopetti during the opening of *Mondo Cane*, the inspiration of the genre. Sadly though, this statement proved to be wildly erroneous. Jacopetti, along with associates Paolo Cavara and Franco Prosperi, were not quite following their own asserted rules. Moreover, 'showing things how they really are' was a standard that most subsequent productions would circumvent.

The opening credit sequence of *Mondo Cane* is an ironic example of how the genre itself would develop and progress. A stray dog is roughly manhandled toward an animal pound already filled to capacity. The dogs inside are barking furiously and leaping at the wire-mesh fence. Finally, the tethered mongrel is pushed through the gate where it scampers to the back of the kennel, pursued by the pack as they greet and examine the new arrival. The sight of this canine welcome, however, is contradicted by the soundtrack: as the stray enters the pound, the barking reaches a crescendo only to be drowned



The mondo genre's first culture shock. *Mondo Cane*.

out by a high-pitched yelping. The impression is that the newcomer is being torn apart. This aural assault obscures what the viewer is actually seeing and changes the relatively harmless situation into a cruel and savage event; a facile and deceptive tactic that remains a subtle, and at times infuriating, idiosyncrasy of the whole mondo genre.

Successive sequences consist of a Valentino look-alike convention; contrived mating games in New Guinea; and US sailors ogling a boat full of bikini-clad models – although the narrator insists they are bare-breasted – circling their vessel. It is at this point that the first shock-tactic edit is employed. As the camera zooms in on the breasts of one particular model, the scene abruptly cuts to the equally close image of a New Guinea native as she suckles a piglet. The narrator, his voice suddenly solemn, informs that the woman has lost her child at birth and tribal law requires her adoption of an animal. Apparently, we are in a land where “there’s not much difference between the life of a child and that of a pig.” This is immediately followed by the customary clubbing to death of a herd of pigs by the men – or “barbarians” – from the same tribe who “have eaten human

flesh."

More humane attitudes towards animals are displayed in a Pasadena pet cemetery where mourners weep over their lost pets and unconcerned dogs urinate on the miniature tomb stones. This devotion towards domestic pets is countered by switching to a Thai marketplace where caged dogs are summarily butchered, cooked and devoured. Cattle breeders in Japan massage their animals to tenderise the meat, feeding them beer to increase their weight and value. In Tabar, selected native girls are secured in cages and fed tapioca roots to fatten them before marriage to the tribal chief. This unlikely scene again offers nothing more than the opportunity to focus on naked breasts. In subsequent scenes, snakes are skinned alive in Thailand and worshipped in Italy. This juxtaposition of image and counter-image – dubious though some of them are – isn't to be bettered in any succeeding mondo production.

Examples of contrivance is none more evident than in the sequence on the 'radioactive archipelago', implied to be contaminated by former atomic bomb tests. Habitating creatures have supposedly mutated into confused versions of their former selves. The birds favour capture to leaving their underground homes, and the fish crawl from the sea and climb trees. After a turtle lays its eggs, instead of returning to the sea it crawls further inland. The narrator explains that contamination has destroyed its sense of direction. When the creature is confronted by a fledgling seabird and waves its flippers in an attempt to move it from its path, the narrator suggests that the perplexed animal believes it has reached the sea and thinks itself to be swimming. In a final shot, the turtle is seen inverted and close to death. All this looks ridiculous nowadays, but was no doubt effective at a time when radiation and its consequences were still largely a mystery.

*Cane's* most startling footage incorporated Gurkhas' single-stroke decapitation of a tethered bull. These graphic scenes were followed by counter spectacles of the Portuguese 'run of the bull' in which the animal is allowed the freedom of the streets – albeit a temporary liberty. Here the bull thunders along, trampling and goring anyone foolish enough to get in its path. The film speed is increased to lend the attacks a more devastating impact, but succeeds only in an unintentional comic appearance.

*Mondo Cane* – its original visceral impact tempered by

today's excessive standards – avoided the taboo of human death. However, the first cultural kill was but one year away, to be incorporated in *Mondo Cane*'s sequel. Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi had tested audience reaction to real life violence in their first production; with *Mondo Cane 2* they would take that transitional step from animal atrocities to actual human death.

## *Mondo Cane 2* ~ 1963

Gualtiero Jacopetti & Franco Prosperi

Following its predecessor in an almost mirror-like fashion, the title sequence of *Mondo Cane 2* focused on the plight of the humble dog. In this instance, the animals are caged individually. The sound, again, has been adapted post-production. The dogs are evidently barking but the noise emitted is nothing but a wheezy croak. To confirm there is no fault with the soundtrack the rap of the cameraman's feet on the floor of the pound is perfectly audible. All the dogs have bloody bandages around their throats, the filmmakers insisting that their vocal chords have been surgically removed to prevent them from barking. This is 'confirmed' with the shot of an unconscious German Shepherd undergoing an operation. Oddly though, the surgery is being conducted in the dog's abdomen – a good half-metre from its vocal chords.

So the two Italians open their documentary with more dubious footage, and a dig at the British Board of Films Censors who had refused *Mondo Cane* a certificate. In his patronising tone, the narrator suggests that the Board might like to cut this offensive sequence like the British surgeon cuts out the dog's voice.

The sequel required footage that would go beyond the gruelling Gurkha rituals in *Mondo Cane*. Political events around the world would offer that opportunity.

Mid-way through the picture, a sequence shot in Saigon breaches the taboo of human sacrifice on film. What takes place is the ritual suicide of a Buddhist monk (although technically, what occurs is murder, as a second party is involved in the actual event). The man sits lotus-like in the centre of a public square. A fellow priest douses him with petrol, places the canister on the ground, bows, then backs away while pouring a trail of flammable liquid to a safe distance. The





The re-staging of Quang Duc's immolation. *Mondo Cane 2*.

event is witnessed by a crowd of Buddhists and citizens supporting protest banners. They, in turn, are barred from the focus of attention by a wall of uniformed police officers. The martyr's assistant crouches by a vehicle, ignites the trail of liquid, and the priest is engulfed in a ball of flame. The observing brotherhood genuflect and the police turn and stand to attention. The burning man topples, one leg giving a final spasmodic jerk. The protest is over. The camera pans across the blackened, still blazing remains.

As this type of immolation was regularly reported during these troubled times in the far east, the sequence is credible. (Such events *have* been filmed before, though not processed as entertainment.) However, the question here is: *Is this a real or staged occurrence?* There is no doubt that such an event did take place on 11 June 1963, the martyr being Quang Duc protesting against the pro-Catholic government's unjust treatment of Buddhists. President Diem, who headed the Catholic regime, had instructed soldiers to fire on protesting Buddhists, resulting in nine fatalities the week previous to Duc's immolation. Photographers captured Duc's suicide and, three days after the occurrence, the pictures appeared in the world's press.



The photograph used to reconstruct the scene. [Associated Press]

But before we compare the press photographs to the film footage, let's take a closer look at the sequence as it appears in *Mondo Cane 2*.

The fact that this type of horrifying protest was aimed at the ruling regime and authorities, makes the police presence in this particular case somewhat conspicuous: such a public protest would be *prevented*, rather than assisted by the law enforcement authorities. Also, the potential martyr would select a high profile area to conduct the ritual in order to achieve maximum exposure. In this instance, the incident occurs on no less a convenient spot than an Esso petrol station forecourt. But most indicative of a staged event is the break during filming.

The sequence commences with the squatted priest being doused with the liquid (this is edited out of some versions). At this point it is quite evidently a real man. As the accomplice backs away, forming the trail-fuse, the crowd are pushed back by the police. The jostling causes authentic-looking camera wobble, and the view is obscured by the robes of a priest backing into the lens. However, when the view is no longer eclipsed, the scene is being observed from

a different vantage point. Moreover, the martyr has changed in appearance with his robes having taken on a much darker tone, as though re-saturated in liquid. During the break in filming it seems that either the priest has been further doused with petrol or a substitution has occurred. As the crucial ignition was imminent it is inconceivable that the cameraman would stop filming and re-site himself several metres from his original, more advantageous position. What we are viewing following the edit is most likely an articulated mannequin; the collapsing body and reflexive leg kick being manipulated by a simple control wire.

There are also telling signs of a reconstruction when comparisons are made with the genuine photographs. In the pictures, there is no evidence of the line of burning petrol that acts as a fuse. Furthermore, the petrol container is positioned about a metre behind Duc, while in the film, the canister is taken away and placed in the vicinity of the vehicle visible in the background. The assisting priest, kneeling by the vehicle in the film is not evident in the photo. As the fireball engulfs the man it travels from the right, yet the photograph shows the right side of Duc's face and shoulder to be free of flame. The vehicle itself is visible in both film and photograph and is accurately positioned, with the bonnet open in both cases. However, subtle differences are evident around the headlight and radiator area. Elongated shadows are visible in the photographs, cast from the observers and indicating a clear sky. No such shaded areas are evident in the film.

So mondo's first cultural kill, on closer examination, is nothing but an elaborate reconstruction; a convincingly staged technicolour suicide. Nevertheless, it was marketed as genuine and sold to the public as a real-death spectacle.

## *Kwaheri – Vanishing Africa ~ 1964*

Thor Brooks & David Chudnow

*Kwaheri* opened with an introduction remarkably similar to that which Jacopetti and Proserpi would use for their next picture, *Africa Addio*. It focused on the changes occurring in the continent; how Africa was transforming from the old to the new, but how parts of the old still survived.

**Dancing called Go-Go!  
Music called Ju Ju!  
Narcotics called Bangi!  
Burning of a Virgin in  
the Fires of Puberty!**

**Land of Kisee...  
Home of the Suks!**



# KWAHERI

pronounced "QUA-HEERIE"

**in COLOR**

**SEE**

Witch Doctors powers over women...  
The Forbidden...The Amazing...  
The Unbelievable...  
Pygmies Sex Orgy...Brain Surgery...  
Giant Snakes and Gigantic Animals..  
Strange People!

*Kwaheri* was one of mondo's less impassioned efforts. It lacked the vitality that the Italians were able to offer. It was, perhaps, slightly more ethical in its documentation, but still the desire to shock was there: whether it be a sudden cut to the face of a child suffering the disfigurement of tumorous eye cancer, or a ridiculously contrived encounter with a monstrous anaconda.

The much publicised trepanation and brain surgery is

revoltingly real. An elderly woman, suffering what may be nothing more traumatic than a headache, sits in the grass as the tribal doctor slices down the centre of her scalp. The wound, bone-deep and eight-inches-long, is yanked apart to reveal the white skull beneath. The exposed skullcap is then scraped with a metal implement until a paper-thin section can be prised out. With bared brain, the flaps of scalp are then pulled back into place, secured with leaves, and left to heal. The doctor, proud of his skills, parades a line of former patients, each showing off their hideously distorted heads.

Far less spectacular is the climactic sacrifice. A selected virgin is wrapped in a shroud of leaves and hoisted to a platform, upon which she is cremated alive during a fertility ritual. The tribesmen and women dance and cavort in frenzied celebration under the influence of a narcotic drug. Whether the girl actually died during the ceremony is difficult to say, although judging by general mondo standards it is very unlikely. The event was probably nothing more sinister than a funeral rite in which a body was cremated, later supplemented with footage of a live girl being wrapped in leaves, and a misleading narration.

## *Africa Addio* ~ 1966

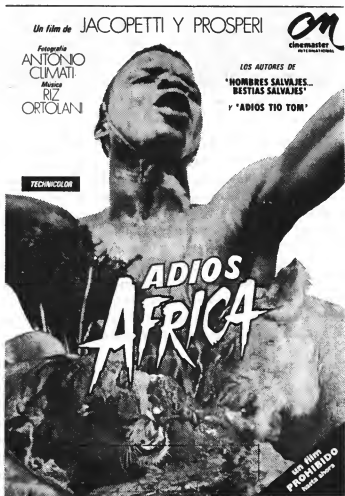
Gualtiero Jacopetti & Franco Prosperi

In Jacopetti and Prosperi's third collaboration, *Africa Addio*, there was no denying the fact that a person died; shot point-blank before the camera. The production was supposed to be a real-life account of the changes occurring in Africa in the mid-60s.

Sequences include the uneasy takeover of the Kenyan government from the British in 1963, the final stages of Mau Mau terrorism, the brutal civil war in the Congo, a race riot in Dar es Salaam, the two-week revolution in Zanzibar, the genocidal slaughter of the Watusi by the Bahutu in Rwanda, and the nationalistic revolt against the Portugese in Angola. In amongst this are scenes of thousands of wild animals being killed in the game parks, rich Africans employing white servants, the futile efforts of preservation societies to save wildlife from slaughter, and murder, torture, mutilation. It is claimed – by Jacopetti and Prosperi – that the crew came close to death on at least one occasion.

The two filmmakers had entered the continent on an unrelated filming expedition, and subsequently became ensnared in the political upheaval and revolutionary change as British colonialism came to an end. Various tribal factions vied for rule and the result was sporadic conflicts, anarchy, random executions, total chaos. Yet, this opportunity of being in the right place at the right time (in a journalistic sense), was once again abused.

As with the previous films, situations were set up and characters acted under direction. Moreover, the technique of altering soundtracks to increase the severity of a scene was pushed to





Two victims of *Africa Addio*.

ridiculous extremes. Take, for instance, the trials and convictions of arrested Mau Mau. The suspects, accused of murder and cattle mutilation, are brought before a white magistrate for sentencing. The narrator details the crime each defendant has been found guilty of, and the magistrate's voice cuts in to pronounce sentence. What he actually utters is: "I sentence you to four years imprisonment." This, however, is overdubbed by the filmmakers with: "You are sentenced to forced labour for life." A slight misrepresentation of the 'facts' to say the least. Similarly, another defendant is sentenced to two years, but the overdub indicates "life imprisonment." Such incongruous details as these tend to pass the casual viewer by, yet even the staunchest of critics acclaimed *Africa Addio* as 'an honest and useful document'.

What proved most daunting and un stomachable for the general public was the unrestricted animal slaughter. Still difficult to watch today are scenes of elephants, buffalo, gazelle and hippopotami randomly killed and butchered. Most shocking is the deliberate slow deaths of a family of hippos feeding in a water-hole. Surrounded by a group of natives who continually spear the animals, when the two adults are finally dispatched, their infant is dragged from the water

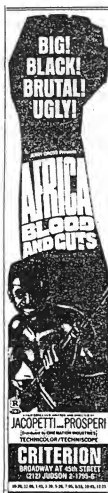
with ropes and repeatedly hacked and speared. There is no quick kill here. The young creature is stabbed and slashed from all sides. Several spears protrude from its body giving the animal the pathetic appearance of a living pin-cushion. When it opens its mouth in pain and terror, its throat and tongue become the target and are methodically sliced and skewered. This sequence was surreptitiously edited from many prints.

One must consider the proximity of the camera crew with regard the incident. Was it coincidence that they were in the vicinity, random witnesses to the inevitable event? Or was it all planned and pre-arranged, much to the detriment of the wildlife?

The sequence that followed was patent fabrication. A wildlife preservation facility, resembling a military control unit, has a large table-map of the area peppered with models of various species of animals. The uniformed personnel push the plastic creatures around the featured co-ordinates. Radio messages are conveyed, a flying doctor is dispatched to a sick elephant, and the animal is given a blood transfusion.

It is worth noting that the helicopter used by this organisation is suspiciously similar to one seen earlier, save for the addition of detachable floatation buoys. In its former appearance, it was used to drive elephants into the gun-sights of a hunter on an apparent 15-minute stress-relieving safari.

On close observation, *Africa Addio* is as contrived as Jacopetti and Prosperi's earlier work. Although here, because of the given location, racist insinuations drip from Jacopetti's self-written dialogue like fat from a cooking pig. Of a particular black man, from





whom the camera pans to reveal a stretchered corpse at his feet, the commentary determines, "He'll never figure out why the whites make such a fuss to find out who ate this fellow's liver. Or why they arrested those soldiers who raped those rebel bitches in their cells." This implication – that because they are black they are primitive, uncivilised cannibals – hasn't changed from the days of *Mondo Cane*.

Further suggestion of cannibalism arises in the bogus Mau Mau trials, where one particular culprit is accused of anthropophagy for eating nothing more abhorrent than monkey flesh.

Despite all of *Africa Addio*'s discrepancies, there is no doubting the authenticity of the on-screen deaths that occur. People are literally put up against the wall and shot. On one occasion a black citizen is roughly manhandled by a group of uniformed mercenaries. In order to deter any audience sympathy, the narrator accuses the unfortunate captive of burning alive 27 children. The camera follows the ruckus from a distance of no more than three-metres as the terrified man, eyes wide, hands held out, pleads with his captors. Regardless, the white commander strides forward, draws his pistol and shoots the defenceless man in the chest. Wounded, he twists and falls to the ground. The self-appointed executioner leans forward and dispatches the victim with a second round through the head. Death ineffectively attempts to draw the body into foetal repose. The leaking corpse is dragged away for unceremonious disposal.

It was this one sequence that caused Jacopetti and Prosperi severe problems. Allegations arose that the filmmakers actually encouraged the unlawful killing of the man for the sake of powerful documentary footage. With the potent scenes condensed and the pleasant scenes excised, on its re-release in 1970 as *Africa Blood and Guts*, the *New York Times* called the film a "horrendous and morbid pictorial catalogue of slaughter, with no possible theatrical validity except that of shocking viewers and arousing in them anguish and despair."

## *Africa Ama* ~ 1972

Guido Guerrasio, Alfredo Castiglioni,

Angelo Castiglioni & Oreste Pellini

Africa became the focus for many subsequent mondo features. One of the better productions was *Africa Ama*. Again it was an Italian production, but this time a more credible approach was exercised. Death ceremonies, circumcision, and child birth were dealt with in a genuine matter-of-fact manner. Exploitative potential was avoided and, throughout the whole film, only one section was patently fabricated.

The documentary opens with a funeral rite during which a village elder, dressed in white – “the colour they are born” – is interred in a tomb. The remainder of the film focuses on tribal rituals and customs. Children’s bodies are decorated with the deft use of a razor blade. Others have their teeth chiselled to embellish their appearance. The ritual of male and female circumcision is explored in lingering detail. One custom involves the killing of village dogs. The animals are throttled to death or have their heads twisted completely around. Their nipples and noses are then sliced away to be used in some therapeutic concoction. A native is seen searching through the undergrowth carrying a tin can. Stock film of a crawling giant millipede is inserted and the man bends to pick up what appears to be nothing more than a short stick. He pretends to bite off the ‘head’ and drops the body in the container. He does this a second time, hardly able to stifle laughter. Finally, he rummages through a clump of bushy undergrowth and leaps back swinging an obviously dead snake. One of the production team runs into shot to aid the ‘stricken’ man. He too is unable to suppress a grin. The whole object of this set-up is made clear when surgical footage of a patient having a poisoned finger amputated follows the supposed attack. Showing the infected digit being dug out at the root, the grisly operation is real; and the producers – determined to incorporate it into their film – no doubt manufactured the snake bite sequence to suit. Perhaps they thought the sight of young girls having their clitoris sliced off or boys having their foreskins cut away wasn’t gruesome enough.

The film concludes with a graphic child birth showing that the black people are indeed born white.

## *Of the Dead* ~ 1972

Jean-Pol Ferbus, Dominique Garny & Thierry Zeno

Like Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* [1971], this film takes a serious look at death and how different cultures approach the subject. A lengthy funeral rite in Thailand is compared to the sterile, industrious equivalent in America. The Thai deceased is neatly clothed and left in the house for several days while family and friend converse with the body. The length of time prior to burial is such that the body begins to distort due to inflating gasses and dilating subcutaneous tissues. When burial commences the face is so swollen it resembles more a pupating insect than the mother it once was. The burial team even have trouble fitting the corpse into the rough-shod coffin such is its distended shape.

For the more socially acceptable Americans, all natural changes are prevented for the sake of post-mortem vanity. Here the corpses are swabbed, scraped, dusted with vacuum cleaners, gutted and sucked dry of all fluids. Then they are packed with embalming powders, sealed shut with nasal and rectal plugs and made up to resemble the living entity they once were. Finally they are locked into



Funerary rite in *Of the Dead*.

luxurious, airtight caskets and buried beneath a concrete slab with the unceremonious aid of a JCB.

A widow watches her late husband on television. She organised the videotaping of his final days in the terminal grip of cancer. Whenever she wishes to resurrect him, she simply slips the tape into the machine and presses the play button.<sup>1</sup>

Thierry Zeno and Terry Stegner's camerawork reveals the destructive power of a crematorium, as high-pressure gas jets consume a body. This technological process is compared to the outdated method used in Third World countries where the deceased are placed atop slow burning pyres, and the destruction of the body is determined by the amount of wood the bereaved can afford.

In South America, the roadside execution of a revolutionary who betrayed his comrades occurs. The traitor is bound, forced to kneel and shot with two rounds from rifles aimed by his friends. As the executioners dig a hasty grave the camera focuses on the victim. The man is evidently still alive, bleeding from nose and mouth but distinctly drawing breath. When the digging of the hole is complete – just deep enough to conceal the casualty – the man is rolled into it and covered with earth.

*Of the Dead* offers no commentary from the filmmakers. The only dialogue comes from the funeral dirges, or the morticians explaining their procedure, the funeral directors demonstrating their wares, cryogenic scientists offering the merits of reanimation of the dead, the wailing grief of the bereaved, and so on. This sincere approach is what sets the film apart from the exploitative nature of the typical mondo production. Rather than abusing the subject and creating a platform for endless shots of horrifying images, *Of the Dead* adopts a method that leaves the viewer fascinated rather than nauseated. Even the minor mishaps that occur, such as the coffin salesman having to break off mid-sentence and run to answer the telephone, or the smile that breaks across the mortician's face when he needs an off-screen prompt in explaining how to prepare a cadaver, helps endorse a sense of candour.<sup>2</sup>

## *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* ~ 1975

Antonio Climati & Mario Morra

*Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* (aka *Ultime Grida Dalla Savana*) opens with the pursuit and kill of a stag. Thus, the theme is established: hunting. Indeed, such a topic offers ample opportunities for the inclusion of atrocity footage. Climati and Morra didn't balk at the challenge and came up with scenes that overshadowed all previous – as well as most subsequent – documentaries for their sheer excruciation.

Following the opening hunt, a hippy commune honouring animal rights. This offers the opportunity to include the over-used shot of a woman suckling an animal. In this case the beneficiary is a goat. To emphasise the virtuosity, a painted sign reads 'more animals, no guns'. Perched on top of the sign are a pair of doves.

The more brutal side of nature is evidenced with typical wildlife footage as leopards and anacondas devour monkeys. One pre-hunting ceremony conducted by an African tribe, involves copulating with the earth. Holes are created in the ground with spears, then the tribesmen insert their penis. This act, it is believed, fertilises the earth to produce animals for the hunt.

The documentary slips into parody with the inclusion of a contrived anti-hunt campaign. Saboteurs infiltrate the hunt group and spike the drinks with a laxative. To lure away the hounds they employ an Afghan bitch, on heat and adorned with ribbons. An archetypal professor observes the effect of the subversion with the aid of a military-style periscope.

The sight of bears catching fresh water salmon is accompanied by a curious tirade which argues that, while documentary filmmakers might say it's alright for *animals* to kill, what of the victims? "They have rights too!" Then the whole assertion is negated by a following sequence, in which the filmmakers arrange a 'race' between a cheetah and an ostrich. The outcome of the challenge is the bird being devoured alive.

What is probably the most unsettling sequence, simply because it is almost certainly genuine, is the death of Pit Dernitsch. Dernitsch, a tourist in a national park, was foolish enough to leave the safety of his vehicle to film a feeding lioness. The event is recorded on Super-8 film by other tourists filming from adjacent vehicles.

Dermitsch leaves the car from where his wife and children observe. He approaches the solitary lioness unaware of the proximity of a second animal. Within seconds he is pounced upon, dragged to the ground and literally eaten alive. The shots volley between scenes of Dermitsch struggling and bloodied beneath the animals, and the reactions of his family in their car. The most troubling shot is that of the lions tearing at unrecognisable pink meat, while above their bobbing heads protrudes Dermitsch's leg; trousers and sock still in place but minus his shoe. When the park ranger arrives all that remains of the unfortunate sight-seer is placed in a plastic bag. His camera is retrieved and the few seconds of unimpressive footage that cost him his life are shown.

Another of *Savage Man's* disturbing scenarios is preceded by the message:

This sequence belongs to the amateur photographer Ramon Ordonez, a surveyor, and the scenes from which the following cinematographic reconstruction was made were shot in 16mm film and re-printed at a speed of 24 frames per second.

Whether it is meant to suggest the sequence has been re-shot with actors, or is actually Ordonez's original footage modified and edited to suit the cinema format, is difficult to say. The ambiguity is no doubt deliberate.

A camera pans across the occupants of a vehicle being driven roughly along some track in the jungles of South America. The grainy footage shows a gang of men, smoking joints, drinking hard liquor, armed with pistols, rifles and machetes. An unnamed construction company has recruited this band of mercenary killers to oust nuisance natives from an exploitable area of jungle. The vehicle reaches a clearing and the crew get out. A tethered dog senses the excitement and barks furiously at the scattering gang. A molotov cocktail is thrown into the bush creating a searing fireball. Voices shout, gunshots are heard, the camera follows the men. Occasional glimpses of Indians are snatched from the dense thicket. The camera picks out a group of bandidos surrounding something on the ground. Rising over an obscuring shoulder, a diminutive dark-skinned man is seen squatting on his haunches, wounded and bloodied. A hand pushes the

camera back as a grinning man raises a pistol to the Indian's head and shoots him in the brain. More rough-shod camerawork. Trees blur by, figures run and point. Another group is discovered. They have a live victim lying on his back in the grass, begging, pleading. Two thugs hold his legs high and wide apart. A third man takes his knife and, after a few strokes of the blade, neatly detaches the victim's penis and testicles. He holds the bloody remnant aloft before forcing the genitalia into the castrated man's mouth. Elsewhere an Indian is having his scalp cut away from his head and the separated pelt is used like a cloth to clean the bloody knife. The final sequence shows the proud assassins bagging their trophies – severed heads, hacked limbs and other bodily parts.

This whole sequence is a disturbingly convincing piece of film despite the disclaimer that precedes it. However, on close inspection it shows itself to be yet another fake. Give-away pointers are a fleeing Indian being shot from behind and actually falling *backwards*, defying the effects of inertia and bullet velocity impact. During the castration scene the victim has his legs held wide apart, giving easy access to his genitals. The knife rubs against his scrotum but doesn't incise the flesh. The scene cuts to his face for a reaction shot, then back to his voided groin area where we see his legs firmly clamped together, obviously concealing his genitals between them. Fake blood gives the illusion of total castration.

*Savage Man . . . Savage Beast* was shown in an uncut form at a British Academy for Film and Television Awards lecture. James Ferman used the documentary as an example of the need for censorial control.

## ***Brutes and Savages ~ 1975***

Arthur Davis

All scenes whether actual or simulated represent actual truth.

This one particular film outstripped all others with its audacious, and utterly bogus, ad campaign. "*See! See!! A man actually eaten alive by a giant crocodile. . .*" guaranteed the poster, illustrated with a garish artist's impression of a screaming black man in the jaws of a crocodile. In its favour, it must be said that this was the only film to

admit to fabrication in its *opening* credits.

"Who are the beasts and who are the savages?" queries the narrator. Notably similar to Thor Brooks' *Kwaheri* in that it is a travelogue/nature film with the added spice of extreme footage, the venue for Davis' expedition is South America where "we witness constant scenes of jungle survival." This is depicted by film of standard wildlife endurance: Jaguar eats rabbit, snake bites rodent, eagle eats snake, and so forth. These scenes are long, and are badgered by Riz Ortolani's funk-disco score. To achieve some kind of pseudo-seriousness, the film endeavours to breed sympathetic emotions from the endemic squalor manifest in the satellite ghettos that surround the affluent cities. The inhabitants, the narrator informs, allow the filming of their children in the hope that an evil curse from the camera will kill them and thus leave less mouths to feed. "We left this place depressed and named it . . . Death Village."

As was a common procedure in the making of a mondo film, Davis resorted to animal slaughter as a supplementary shock factor. Leaving the suburbs the team seek permission to film an obscure 'turtle-wedding'. Their guide introduces them to a 'Mr. Fixit' who can procure anything – including authorization to film the ceremony – at a price. Contrary to Mr. Fixit's stated abilities, the crew are told they cannot film the rite. Regardless, the team persevere without consent and, we are told, risk death for doing so. The whole fatuous wedding ceremony culminates in the killing of a captured turtle. Flipped on its shell, the animal has its throat slowly sawn through. The camera sits close enough to enter the gaping wound and gasping mouth. Davis also incorporates a trace of sexuality in his film and allows the camera to follow the married couple to their wedding bed, where they perform in an embarrassed, soft-porn fashion. To further the implication of the natives' primitive lifestyle, the narrator reveals should the wife not bear a son within one year then she will be returned to her father, who will poison her.

A woman is shown being prepared for sacrifice to the Sun God. However, in keeping with the animal exploitation, her place is substituted with a llama. In a revolting sequence which shows the spreadeagled, struggling animal having its chest cavity cut open, the slayer inserts his hand and, after seemingly endless rummaging, yanks the still-beating heart from its anchoring cartilages and feeding arteries. The organ leaps and jumps in his fist as the remains of the





"They're very dangerous . . ." *Brutes and Savages*.

creature are ritualistically dissected and buried.

. Davis, dressed in stereotyped safari garb, requests permission to film the customs of another Indian tribe. The tribesmen offer to demonstrate their manhood initiation ritual. This involves 15-year-old boys crossing a crocodile infested river. Should they reach the other side unscathed, they become men. However, if they are maimed in any way, their imperfection results in expulsion from the tribe and they are driven from the village to die in the jungle. (This notion of elimination of the disabled intimates a kind of primitive Nazism, no doubt derived from the mind of the script writer rather than a genuine cultural practice.) "We set up our cameras and waited," says the narrator as the juveniles reach the river bank and the first initiate crosses cautiously. Wading through the water, stock footage of crocodiles plunging into a river are edited in. Safely across, the first neophyte awaits the second. Again, as the next boy enters the river, stock footage is inserted, but this time a model crocodile is also utilised. The artificial creature and native clash, writhing in the bloodied water until a severed hand floats to the surface. Then a ruptured knee-joint. Then a chewed and detached head in the jaws of

the replica. The attack itself is one of the most pitifully crude enactments seen in any previous or subsequent mondo production. The whole event concludes with the narrator speaking the understatement, "After witnessing that secret manhood event we shuddered a little . . ." Being the focus of the ad campaign, the attack is heralded throughout *Brutes and Savages* with constant references to the savagery of crocodiles. A crash-course in the biology of the reptile is related in the opening moments of the picture. Later, as the expedition is heading down river and the beasts can be seen wallowing on the river's edge, a native confirms from the safety of his boat: "They're very dangerous . . . They're very dangerous."

To retain a climate of taboo infringement, the origin of cocaine is investigated. In a Bolivian marketplace, Davis stands before the camera holding a bag of the unprocessed coca leaves. "10 cents a bag. Anyone can buy it." He then slips a leaf into his mouth, chewing prudently as though expectant of an instant high.

The team witness a customary event which occurs annually in a village: a symbolic stone-fight re-enacted between locals. The narrator insists the origin of the fight has long been forgotten.



Arthur Davis 'with Savage'. *Brutes and Savages*.

Paradoxically, as though he has forgotten his previous line, he reveals the custom emanated from the mass rape of shepherd women by rival villagers many years ago. The stone throwing concludes with a one-to-one face-off between the best of the opposing sides. Equipped with sling-shots they hurl rocks at each other, dodging and avoiding incoming stones. The cameraman is incongruously stationed between them. One man pretends to get struck on the head – oblivious to the rock evidently landing behind him – and falls to the ground. Later, a man is observed with a bruised eye and the production team resolve, with irrational medical expertise, to transport him to a hospital for open-cranial surgery. The trepanation is filmed throughout. As with the finger amputation in *Africa Ama*, it is likely that convenient operation footage was found and written into the script.

The crew visit a museum. “By now, we were getting used to filming without permission,” admits the commentary as Davis enters the building. Although the narrator explains that the clandestine filming is rushed and inadequately lit, there is no discernable quality change. The ‘unfilmable’ objects consist of a variety of earthenware items each depicting a sexual act. Homunculus-like figures copulate, fellate and, in what the narrator claims to be the depiction of torture, sodomize. Davis points to the erotic elements of each piece.

To add further sensational variation, Davis records acts of simulated zoophilia between farmer and llama. Lily-white buttocks pump at the animal’s hindquarters to show that “the animal’s have their own god and their own rights.” How bestiality indicates this is not explained.

As a whole, *Brutes And Savages* is a lame attempt to exploit taboos. Its coverage of sex, drugs and death is channelled in a patronising manner. Because of this, the film is memorable only for its ‘real-death’ promotion and nothing else. Davis re-used the same scam in a later documentary production, *The Art of Killing*, which centred on the martial arts. This film too, it was claimed, incorporated a genuine fatality.

## *Addio Ultimo Uomo* ~ 1978

Alfredo & Angelo Castiglioni

"White men," said Sengôr, with a voice loud in poetry and of African culture, "go amongst all the lost villages of my land with your register, with your photographic machine and collect testimony of the truth, the controversy, all the old jealous customs of a very long human story. Trust only their own voices. When they die it is like your civilisation burning all the libraries."

The Castiglioni became the temporary torch-bearers of the mondo genre. They followed *Africa Ama* with another impressive offering, *Mondo Magic*. Again it focused on the subcontinents and their primitive indiscretions, combining sex rituals with the grotesque. Though void of death footage, other than that inflicted on animals, *Mondo Magic* did supply the viewer with some stomach-turning images, particularly those concerning the Dinka herdsmen and their cattle devotion. No spray-can insect-repellents here; the tribespeople shower under torrents of fresh cattle urine. So too, fertility rituals demand the fondling and licking of the cow's vagina – all shown in unembarrassed detail.

The filmmakers however, were not content with mere tribal customs and, in 1978, they produced one of the genre's severest entries: *Addio Ultimo Uomo* (literal trans. 'Farewell the Last Man'). The film still retained a degree of sexuality, becoming, like the brutality, stronger and more explicit. Unnecessarily intrusive at times, the camera offers fly-on-the-wall documentation of natives copulating in their huts, women dilating their vaginas on greased, wooden dildos. Civilised sex however, is shown as sleazy strip joints and coin-op porno loops. Sex made impotent by commercialisation.

This juxtaposition of primitive culture alongside 'acceptable' civilised behaviour runs throughout *Uomo*. For instance, the clubbing to death of a dog prior to cooking the creature and cutting out its genitals, is offset with the more acquiescent, yet totally unnecessary, gassing to death of several dogs because they have simply become an inconvenience to modern society. Furthermore, primitive scarification, though painful to watch, pales into insignificance when compared to the savagery of contemporary cosmetic surgery. Here, paranoid

women undergo what are virtually living autopsies in order to transform their natural appearance into something they consider to be more sociably acceptable. Kilos of fatty abdomen tissue are carved away. Breast are systematically reduced via sweeping slices of a honed scalpel. Noses are altered by hammer and chisel, and the fragments of shattered nasal bone yanked out with pliers. Extreme images indeed, but by no means *ordinary* behaviour, as the culture comparison attempts to suggest.

The film contains what must still stand as some of the most harrowing sequences ever committed to celluloid. One particularly gruesome event entails the preparation of a corpse for burial. Family mourners weep, dance, and play solemn funeral dirges as the unsophisticated morticians make the cadaver presentable for the afterlife. The body is propped against a wall, its face bloated and fly-blown. Relatives peel away loose pieces of shedding skin. One woman has particular trouble detaching the sticky derma from her fingers. The sloughing detritus is dropped into a hole dug between the deceased's feet. Secreting fluid is wiped from behind the swollen lips, and mucus squeezed from the nose, before wads of cotton are forced deep into the nostrils with wooden skewers. The eyes, bulging behind stretched but still sealed lids, appear ready to spill from their sockets like egg-yokes as the lifeless head is scraped of exfoliate. Countless numbers of tiny flies feed on the post-mortem excretions. Only when the corpse is finally wrapped in its funerary garb can the viewer feel exorcised of the ghastly image. Yet, as repulsive as the sequence may be, there is still a remnant of curiosity that prevents the observer from turning away.

*Uomo* contains yet another thoroughly disturbing sequence. It lasts but a few minutes yet leaves the viewer stunned. The camera follows a group of natives as they pursue an invisible prey through the trees. Each man is armed with spear, knife and machete. The narration tells of a 15-year inter-tribal dispute, and it transpires that a hut-burning adversary is being hunted. When finally captured he is pinned to the ground with a spear in his belly. Still alive, lying on his back in the dust, writhing on the end of the blade, his captor pushes the weapon through his stomach wall. Circling the group of tormentors, the cameraman seeks the most unobscured shot. The victim's hand grips the spear point as it pumps up and down, spilling blood. The camera picks out a ceremonial dagger sheathed on the

forearm of one of the attackers. Next moment it is put to use. The antagonist's penis, uncontrollably expelling bladder contents, is taken in hand and slowly amputated. Pressurised blood bursts across the man's thighs as the organ's circulatory system is cut through. As the penis is taken away, a final spurt of blood ejects from the remaining stump. The camera lingers on the damage before quickly panning to view further mutilation: the victim's hand being hacked away at the wrist. The narrator intones, "There you are, justice. They've done the justice. But at least it's something of the past that doesn't belong to us in modern times."

As brutal and shocking as the incident is, this, like most exclusive and extreme mondo sequences, is fabricated slaughter. Its inclusion with genuine documentary footage and 'unrehearsed' camerawork create effective verisimilitude. However, analysis of the continuity exposes the construction for what it is.

The victim is first viewed already speared. His own hands hold the spear head to his torso; blood pools in his indented stomach and runs to his groin. When the camera picks out his face, his eyes are merely closed bearing no evidence of pain or terror at his manifestly fatal predicament. Next, the shot cuts to the native's legs being restrained by two further accomplices; pans to the blood stained torso and thighs, then cuts to a view of the dagger strapped to the forearm of another attacker. Cut now to the act of castration. The stomach wound has *disappeared* as have all signs of blood. The victim lies motionless as two people perform the impromptu operation. One covers the base of the penis and pubis with his hand, the other takes hold of the organ and begins to slice through the flesh. Again, another edit to a different angle: the penis is still being held, but no incisions are visible. The accomplice's hand is in position on the pubic area while beneath that is the hand of the victim, not, it would seem, attempting to prevent the loss of his manhood, but in fact retaining a prosthetic appliance. The victim urinates briefly. Cut again to a different view point and the organ is virtually detached. Blood bursts onto the thighs as the shaft is severed free. The second hand adamantly and conveniently remains in position, covering the base even when the mutilation is complete. Further indication that some manufactured appliance is being used.

Unlike the earlier Jacopetti/Prosperi collaborations, the Castiglioni avoided condescending racism, despite attempting to

display the native as a primitive savage. The castration sequence is immediately followed by a more 'civilized', but equally violent atrocity. This brief excursion into techno-brutality is a compilation of the horrors of modern warfare. Unlike the castration scene this is all real, no fabrications. Disembowelled babies clinging to life despite their horrific wounds, victims being tortured, amputated limbs tossed around like pieces of broken furniture, brain matter oozing from broken heads, bodies so mangled they are not even recognizable as a species.

## *Faces of Death* ~ 1978

Conan Le Cilaire

This first instalment of a series is diametrically opposite to the candour shown in *Of the Dead*. Hosted by the aptly named bogus consultant, Dr Frances B. Gröss, this is an insulting excursion into the realm of auto accidents and slaughterhouses. Feigning a serious investigation into the mystery of death, *Faces* is nothing short of freak-show exploitation. The film utilises stock footage of autopsies, air crash victims and other newsreel atrocities, combining them with



Frances B. Gröss. *Faces of Death*.



The restaurant sequence in *Faces of Death*.

fabricated scenes of executions, Satanic cannibal rituals and similar unconvincing events. This, added to Gröss' scripted polemic and the most appalling choice of musical accompaniment, makes the whole fiasco ridiculously pitiful rather than thought-provoking.

Right from the start, and his first appearance – removing surgical gloves, implying that he has just carried out the pre-credit autopsy – the film attempts to give credence to Gröss being a true pathologist. In actual fact Gröss looks nothing of the sort, having more the image of a second-rate mad scientist than he does a 'doctor of the pathological sciences'. Untidy tousled hair, twisted spectacles, weaselly features, sparse beard – it all combines to produce a truly pathetic character. His fascination with death, we are informed, began





Alligator bites man in *Faces of Death* publicity shot.

when Gröss had a recurring funeral-dream. From that day he was destined to travel the world to study death in its various forms.

The camera descends into the catacombs of Guanajuato, Mexico, to observe the mummified corpses on display. Lights are shifted around in order to create life-giving shadows on the dead faces, thus sensationalising a genuinely fascinating spectacle.<sup>3</sup>

A farmyard chicken is decapitated with an axe to the tune of *Old MacDonald's Farm*. The headless body is filmed cavorting around the holding and Gröss remarks on his desire to now become a vegetarian. Cue the slaughterhouse footage of blood and guts and koshered creatures bleeding to death from meat-hooks. Still remarking on man's carnivorous nature, this is followed by a contrived sequence. Supposedly taking place in a middle eastern city – as indicated by the stock footage – a studio-created restaurant with Caucasian belly-dancer and waiter is the setting for an unusual culinary delight. Four tourists sit around a table as the waiter enters carrying a screaming monkey. The creature is secured in a contraption that allows only its head to protrude through the centre of the table. The diners are supplied with small mallets with which to smash open the skull. This done, the fresh brains are devoured raw. This one segment caused much distress with viewers worldwide, despite it being fake and the real monkey obviously substituted with a dummy head. (In Germany, the order of events were re-arranged so that *Faces of Death* concluded on this monkey segment. In a subsequent re-release, the sequence had to be excised altogether.) Animal atrocities continue with seal culling, following which Gröss vows he will never again wear the skin of an animal. A short glimpse of crocodile poachers is succeeded by a laughable fabrication of a supposed

alligator attack, concluding with a game warden being dragged, dead and limbless, from a lake.

The prevarications continue with apparent assassinations and interviews with bogus assassins. Also false is the police shootout with a psychotic father who has cut the throats of his captive family; a sequence capped with a 'hand-over-the-lens' edit.

Bleak reality is witnessed as the camera glides through the crowded corridors of a city morgue. Here, the dead share trolleys like lovers. We see the victims of fire, shootings, auto-accidents and high rise death-falls. We view their internal organs, their shattered skulls, and brains. Also on display, a dead baby opened like a colourful pop-up book. However, the producers in their hypocritical wisdom judge the sight of genitalia to be offensive and blur out the abhorrent anatomy as the camera passes the naked corpses. It is almost impossible to comprehend the logic behind this action; that, following scenes showing the unwarranted destruction of the human body, the



'Execution' by decapitation. *Faces of Death.*

sight of a penis or vagina is determined to be an unacceptable violation of decency.

The brief excursion into authenticity is succeeded by further spurious scenes. A prisoner is escorted to the gas chamber and promptly executed before the camera. For dramatic effect, we glimpse the condemned man's point-of-view from within the death chamber. The narrator intones the merits of this method of execution. The execution theme is continued with the electrocution of one 'Larry DeSilva'. Two guards escort the man from his cell to the tones of a mournful harmonica. As he is strapped into the chair, the music takes on a more merry, slapstick timbre. Electrodes are clamped to his leg and head, and his eyes are taped over. As the high voltage courses through his body he bucks and twitches in the seat. The current is turned off and a doctor examines him for life signs. After checking DeSilva's heart, the doctor gives the camera an exaggerated shake of the head. The electricity surges again until blood leaks from behind the tape covering his eyes.

More bogus footage follows with what Gröss claims to be film secretly shot by a tourist in the middle east. This doesn't explain the variety of camera angles and close-up shots. A man is led from a tent, forced to kneel at a chopping block and beheaded with the single stroke of a sword. The headless body topples to the sand and refuses to bleed, such is the shabbiness of the economical effect.

The world of bizarre sects is explored with the stereotyped reconstruction of a Satanic cult performing a cannibalistic ritual. The leader – deliberately resembling Charles Manson, as though that itself offers credibility to the sequence – disembowels a stolen cadaver and passes the organs to his followers, who devour with gusto the body parts. Gröss claims to have gained the trust of the cult's leader and thus been granted the privilege of filming the ritual. We see the body's abdomen sliced open and the sharing of the organs. However, the apparent orgy that followed is excluded.

Reality resumes with newsreel footage of a woman throwing herself to her death from an apartment block. Again, the choice of music is somewhat unfitting and desperately insensitive. The intro countdown to the musical piece ("One, two, ah one, two, three, four . . .") is timed to coincide with the woman's leap from the ledge. The same insensitivity is displayed towards victims of drowning as the camera's eye circles their washed-up, bloated forms

and cheerful music spills from the soundtrack.

Additional concocted footage ensues again with supposed randomly shot tourist film. A couple drive through a national park and pull into a clearing where another vehicle is parked, the occupants of which are feeding and filming a grizzly bear. The scene cuts between film shot by the respective couples. The driver of the newly arrived vehicle exits his car and approaches the bear which promptly kills and eats him. The first cameraman records the death. Remarkably similar in context to the film of Pit Dernitsch's death by misadventure in *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, this sequence is conspicuous fabrication. The final shot in the Dernitsch footage shows a lioness with the dead man's camera in its mouth. Similarly, in the *Faces of Death* sequence, the bear is seen ambling into the woods with a rubbery severed limb hanging from its jaws.

The documentary reaches its nadir with the inclusion of extreme accident footage, culled, no doubt from newsreel archives. The remains of a cyclist are seen beneath the wheels of a truck. After the body has been removed, the camera remains long enough to observe a paramedic scooping blood clots, hair and brain tissue from the tarmac. Equally repellent is the voyeuristic approach to the aftermath of a rail crash and air disaster. Again, the camera simply pans and zooms around wrecked machine fragments in search of organic debris. Movement only ceases when an amputated limb, crushed face or scattering of intestinal detritus is discerned from fuselage and engine parts.

As though attempting to lift the gloom, the film continues with an 'investigation' into life after death. The concocted study results in laughable audio recordings and ridiculous spirit photographs. *Faces of Death* finally aspires to redeem its dejective strategy by concluding with a birth scene – albeit bogus: a woman's face grimaces, relaxes and an off-screen baby cries. Credits roll.

Made for the Japanese market, the film was unexpectedly popular on video in America. Many viewers believed the overtly fake scenes to be genuine. Had they remained to the final credit, however, they would have seen the admission of fabrication and that Gröss was in fact a role-playing actor (Michael Carr).

"I found it particularly offensive and revolting as did everyone else who saw it." David Mellor speaking of *Faces of Death* prior to his resignation from parliament.

"It seems to prove a point that perhaps we're not as intelligent as we think." Dr. Frances B. Gröss.

## *Faces of Death II* ~ 1981

Conan Le Cilaire

Following the success of *Faces of Death* on video, it was inevitable that a sequel would follow. Again Dr. Frances B. Gröss hosted the show, retaining the air of insanity evident in his previous outing. "Several months after I completed my first study, I realised that some of my original theories were no longer valid," he admits. "My optimism regarding life after death has greatly diminished." (This confession negates the 'evidence' proffered by Gröss at the close of the first episode – photographic proof of the afterlife.)

*Faces of Death II* differentiates itself from the prequel in that it is composed almost entirely of genuine footage. Only one sequence, that depicting a hostage situation at a drug store, appears fabricated. The rest of the film features animal experimentation; bloodied seas as whales are hunted; the autopsies of cancer victims; Welshman Johnny Owen's final and fatal boxing match; a murder museum; victims of the guillotine; a monologue from a man who believes he owns the severed head of Joaquin, a notorious Wild West outlaw; and, following a *coup d'état*, mass execution as men are gunned down by firing squad in Liberia (a crowd gathers cheering as the men are bound to poles; a soundman with a boom microphone walks into shot. The condemned men are eventually dispatched by several volleys of gunfire. The gruesome episode is played in slow motion as the end theme commences).

It could be argued that *Faces of Death II* is the most faithful of the series, simply because it doesn't set out to patronise the audience with unlimited use of hoax material. However, this doesn't propel the film into the category of such serious works as *Of the Dead*, but merely achieves a style akin to that found in *Encounter with Disaster* and *Days of Fury*: familiar and obscure newsreel spliced together, a host navigating the viewer between the two. With *Faces of Death II*, an eagerness to retain some form of political correctness and avoid offending American viewers is apparent during Vietnam atrocity footage. When the US-backed napalming of a village occurs

– as in the frequently seen film stock showing naked, burning children fleeing their homes – Gröss insists the infraction was an accident. However, when similar carnage is shown illustrating the effect cluster bombs have on the children of a Lebanese village, Gröss remarks, “. . . the enemy must be destroyed at all costs. Even



### Faces of Death II

if he is a child.”

The same musical insensitivity adopted in the previous volume is evident in part *II*, as yodelling accompanies death by avalanche, and a big brass finale showcases the punch that will kill Johnny Owen.

## *The Killing of America ~ 1981*

Sheldon Renan

All of the film you are about to see is real. Nothing has been staged.

A superior production from the pen of Leonard Schrader, brother of Hollywood writer and director Paul Schrader. The documentary is an indictment towards the out-of-control gun law in the chaos of American society, and plays as a direct warning to the perils of legal weapon availability. Aimed specifically at the Japanese market, as were many such documentaries, *The Killing of America* is a statistical analysis of murder. The pre-credit declaration of authenticity proves reliable, although Chuck Riley's downcast narration, with lengthy mid-sentence pauses, lends the proceedings a slight surreal quality; nowhere more so than in his recount of Dean Corll and Wayne Henley's ruthless homo-erotic killing spree. "Wayne Henley. [*pregnant pause*] He first gets involved in the Houston mass murders in 1971 [*pregnant pause*] when he is only 15 [*pregnant pause*] by bringing his buddies to the house of a fatherly friend who is twice his age."

Before the opening credits roll a suspect is shot dead on a street corner by armed police. As the film progresses, John F. Kennedy's head expels its contents for the umpteenth time. Assassin/scapegoat Oswald receives a fatal bullet from Jack Ruby. Other politicians feel the bite of the bullet – fatal or otherwise – and Sirhan Sirhan apologises for the killing of Robert Kennedy. Bodies litter the streets of L.A. during the race riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King. The police brutally assault Vietnam protesters and, in what is possibly the most widely, and frequently seen snuff sequence, General Loan positions a bound Vietnamese suspect before the camera, places a pistol to his head and shoots him in the brain. The cameraman instinctively films the dying

man, curled and blood-jetting on the road.<sup>4</sup>

An in-store video security system records a hold-up and the death of a cashier. An assailant pulls a pistol and demands cash. Unprovoked, an accomplice encourages, "Shoot him." The man does and the cashier falls to the ground, fatally wounded. The men flee. Out of sight, from the floor, the wounded man screams; his cries are lost to the happy muzak playing.

The film utilises an interview with killer Ed Kemper, and court cases of Ted Bundy and Lawrence Bittaker, the latter audio-taping the torture and murder of his victims. Other archive footage includes the police siege of the clock tower from where Charles Whitman shot 16 citizens dead. Similarly, an assault on the apartment-roof bastion of sniper Robert Essex – black racist. Mad preacher Jim Jones encourages his followers to kill their children then take their own lives. James R. Hoskins takes over a Cincinnati TV station at gun-point. After relating his qualms to the camera – about how police got the magnums and are always hurting people – Hoskins requests filming to cease before turning the gun on himself.

Despite its sobriety, *Killing of America's* final admonition is more akin to a William Castle feature – and no doubt devised to generate maximum uneasiness amongst the audience – than it is to cold, statistical fact:

*"While you watched this movie, five more of us were murdered. One was the random killing of a stranger."*

Far bleaker is the realisation that these statistical figures need to be drastically increased to fall in line with contemporary murder rates.

## *Sweet and Savage ~ 1983*

Mario Morra & Antonio Climati

This film, being the third and final part of Climati/Morra's 'savage' trilogy, attempted to emulate its paradoxical title by juxtaposing pleasant and unsavoury footage. Mike Gunn, wildlife conservationist, spends his days protecting the animals of the Serengeti. On first appearance he seems to be just another hunter. However, instead of shooting the rhinos his rifle appears to be trained on, he fires a round at the land mines the creatures are about to step on. To indicate how





Dead Tibetan monk. *Sweet and Savage*.

widespread the mining problem is, stampeding animals are shown detonating the hidden explosives and spiralling all tattered and torn into the air. Of course what we are actually seeing is footage of thundering hooves intercut with already dead carcasses heaped onto dynamite and blown-up on cue. Stock war atrocities are edited in when Gunn reminisces his days as a mercenary. The majority of *Sweet and Savage* is given over to the killing of animals. Ostriches are de-plumed with shears before having their gangly necks twisted. Hogs and foxes are hunted and torn apart. Dolphins are disembowelled on the shore. Elsewhere, Indian fakirs pierce various parts of their anatomy to deter use of that specific appendage. The tongue is speared through to impede speech, the cheeks pinned together to prevent sustenance and, to prevent intimacy, the penis is spiked like a pin-cushion.

The body of a Tibetan monk is carried to a mountain top in a traditional funerary rite. There the corpse is systematically dismembered, gutted and decapitated "in a ritual never filmed before." The remains are fed to waiting vultures and wild dogs. One would expect such a sequence to be fake but in this case it does look genuine. No neat, single-stroke cuts here. The limbs are repeatedly hacked emitting showers of fatty tissue with each chop.

In downtown Puerto Rico, Karl Wallenda falls to his death



Torture sequence excised from most versions of *Sweet and Savage*.

from a tightrope slung between two buildings. A stuntman plunges to his doom from the top of the Kentucky tower during a movie stunt. His life is terminated when he tears through the faulty airbag and collides with the road beneath. Footage of the dead resulting from the Iran/Iraq conflict is followed by the apparent capture of a sniper. He is jostled by his adversaries who seem unsure of what to do with him. He is eventually forced to kneel and shot in the head. The moment of execution is conveniently obscured by an on-looker and the whole sequence looks distinctly fabricated . . . as is the execution of another prisoner: here the man is tied between two vehicles and quartered. A brief sequence depicting the activities of aerobic exercisers in an American gymnasium is followed by scenes of naked African dancers – the supposed origin of aerobics. The narrator names the tribe as the Mashoni. The identical footage was used in *Savage Man* . . . *Savage Beast* in which instance the dancers were named as the Lobi tribe. An example of the misinformative style of the mondo film.

*Faces of Death III ~ 1985*

Conan Le Cilaire

The documentary opens with imported footage of European auto pile-ups and the incinerated remains trapped within crushed vehicles. Mid-way through is the anticipated slaughterhouse sequence with the usual comical soundtrack. The remainder of the film is an unremarkable patchwork of fabricated incidents.

A TV camera crew ride with police officers following a spate of brutal, random killings. Remarkably, they stumble upon the dismembered body of his latest victim. Attempts at authenticity are made by interviewing the victim's friends who mumble and bumble like the two-bit actors they really are. The camera peers into a wastebasket where neatly cut limbs lie amongst the rubbish. A sniper is shot by police in an apartment block. A snuff movie is discovered in the home of an arrested psychopath and played during his trial. A sky diver misses his target and lands within the boundaries of an alligator farm where he is eaten alive by the hungry reptiles. Officials in El Salvador torture a suspect; the interrogation culminates with his execution by hanging. Police are summoned to a home where an assassin's bomb has been placed and search the premises with cameraman in pursuit. When the device is discovered, they erect a metal shield with observation window for no other reason, it seems, than to enable the newsman to film the defusing of the bomb. The package contains enough explosives to destroy the building. From a distance of two-metres, the cameraman films the operation. When the bomb detonates, he acquires his desired shot of the engineer's body.

On the top-floor window ledge of a building stands a middle-aged man. In the street below the gathering crowd encourage him to jump. This he does . . . but not before the camera crew have had time to join him on the adjacent fire-escape platform. Another camera at street level records a stiff-looking mannequin being tossed from the building. A mother drags her child over to view the remains. One witness is asked to describe the sound that the body made when it hit the pavement, ". . . a kind of splash, kind of gooey like," he recounts. Other segments show shark and barracuda attacks, rattle-snake bite victims and weekend soldiers feigning real Vietnam combat during which the cameraman loses his life.

The final section of this volume is another ridiculous sham.

A potential car thief is attacked by a pair of guard dogs in a car sale lot. The whole event is captured by the observing eye of a security camera. When the videotape is replayed the viewer sees the lot being scanned left to right. At its maximum swing the camera pauses before scanning the lot again. Coincidentally, the thieves climb the gate during this pause. As the scene sweeps, the dogs pursue and catch one thief. He struggles with the animals but, when the camera pans across the area again, is motionless save for the dogs dragging his lifeless body around. Gröss intones that this retribution is in some way divine intervention because dog is God spelled backwards.

Following the same redundant formula of the previous two instalments, part *III* delivered what was to be Gröss' final appearance for the *Faces of Death* series. Even he, it seems, couldn't cope with the contemptuous perspective beyond this episode. The only point of interest in the film is the suggestion of the snuff movie as an actual entity. Conspicuously fake, the sequence involves the trial of one 'Mike Lorenzo' arrested on suspicion of multiple murder. The foremost piece of evidence for the prosecution is a videotape. The recording of the offender torturing a victim is played to the jury. At the most pertinent moments Lorenzo conveniently demands filming to cease, "*Shut that fuckin' camera off. . .*"

Despite the erosion of the series into the almost entirely faked travesty of part *III*, Le Cilaire refused to lie down and die and strived to resurrect the cycle five years later. The half-decade interlude effectively restocked the archives with fresh newsreel atrocity footage.

## *True Gore ~ 1987*

Mathew Dixon Causey

"The film you are about to see is disturbing. It is not for everyone. It is assuredly not for children. It has already been banned in countries across the world. In part I agree with the ban because the footage you will see in a moment is *troubling*. But a pity it has been banned because after you see this film I think you will find it will be impossible to ever look at your life or existence with the same eyes."

This is an independent production created for the video market.

Industrial noise music is supplied by the Atom Smashers, and Monte Cazazza<sup>5</sup> is credited as creative consultant. The narrator disguises his identity by use of optical solarisation “because of the controversial nature of the film.”

*True Gore* is divided into four parts, the first being subtitled *The World of the Dead*. Upon some unnecessary polemic from the ‘mystery’ narrator (“To pretend to show death is sometimes tolerated, but to disclose the reality of death is treason. The treason is True Gore. Why turn away from reality? You are going to die. Maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow”), there follows what appear to be medical films of bodies in various stages of decay. The instructor demonstrates the ease of hair removal from a dead scalp, lifts flaps of blistered skin and pokes and prods at gas-inflated bellies and scrotums. A woman found dead in a vacant warehouse lies on a mortuary table. Her body tunnelled and excavated by rats, her face a fleshless skull. Likewise, another woman discovered in her apartment, has lost all her facial tissue to the hunger of her pets. The wrecked faces of unsuccessful suicides are displayed void of features. Oddly, one subject has the eyes screened out to avoid identification, yet the vast wound beneath caused by a shotgun in the mouth is a far more discernable feature.

The disturbing tape-recording of the Guyana massacre, and Jim Jones’ final sermon, is played at length. So concludes part one of *True Gore*.

Part two, *The Eroticism of Decay*, utilises footage shot by Psychick TV for its promotional video *First Transmission*.<sup>6</sup> Naked people are whipped, smeared with blood, and have the symbolic three-barred cross cut into their flesh during bizarre initiatory rites into the Temple Of Psychick Youth (TOPY). The narrator claims they are home movies confiscated by the authorities but Cazazza was no doubt the supplier, having strong links with Genesis P. Orridge, founder of TOPY.

Fake footage supposedly depicting the torture of a prisoner, as acquired by Amnesty International, shows a man suspended by his feet being beaten and submerged in a water-filled barrel. A snake is thrown into the barrel for added effect.

Animal experimentation is shown in horrifying scenes of cruelty. A pig has its body hair shaved and is subjected to the agony of a pressurised blow-torch. The searing flame is played over the

squealing creature's body which blisters and splits. Half-inch-thick flaps of cooked flesh flake from the still-living animal as the results are observed. Following its ordeal, the animal is offered water to drink. A living cat has its scalp sliced open and fragile skull cracked like an egg-shell. The bared brain is scooped out, the empty cavity padded with cotton-wool and the scalp sewn back in place. What this experiment achieved is not explained.

*Art and Death*, the third part, uses further scenes from Psychick TV's *First Transmission*. Featuring Monte Cazazza's films, the incongruous black square creeps into shot to blot out 'offensive' bodyparts. Cosey Fanni Tutti<sup>7</sup> squats on a toilet and allows a giant millipede to scuttie over her labia, her vaginal lips are obscured by the floating black square. Similarly an abscessed penis is seen, its owner digging at the bleeding wound with a metal instrument. Again, the glans is censored to avoid offence.

One of Mark Pauline's<sup>8</sup> animartonic creations is mutilated on stage during a performance by the band Factrix fronted by Monte Cazazza. The creature in this instance is the remains of a dead pig reanimated by a mechanical skeleton. The muzzle of the animal is destroyed with a dentist's drill.

An unidentified female necrophile is interviewed. The lurid scenarios – which range from having an old man call for her farts and eat her excrement, to, "I would like to break off a man's cock and stick it in my vagina and let it grow there" – sound like De Sade and several case histories as noted by Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Later revelations by a young 'murderer' are no more convincing.

A brief excursion into the perils of AIDS and its comparison to the Black Death plague is followed by a full autopsy which concludes part three.

The final segment, *The Scientific Age*, opens with the Nuremburg rallies and Hitler's ranting dogma. Scenes of exterminated Jews are intercut with the madman's Utopian vision. The Nazis themselves are seen executed by rope and rifle. The theme of mass destruction is continued with the horrors of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The disfigured victims of the atomic bomb – noseless, lipless children, eyeless women, earless men – are intercut with an animated US government education film indicating the merits of nuclear power.

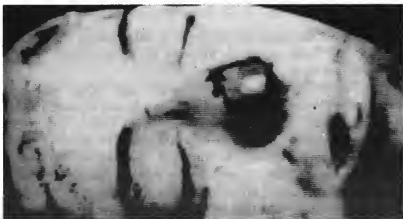
The film ends with a solarised trip through a cemetery.

In true mondo tradition, *True Gore* has its share of fabricated scenes and unfitting sound effects. The former involving a supposed suicide victim being lifted from a bath and the Amnesty torture film; the latter, ridiculous squelchy noises added to the cranial excavation during the autopsy sequence.

## *Death Scenes* ~ 1989

Nick Bougas

This cash-in on the desire to view the unviewable arose from the discovery of a private collection of photographs. *Death Scenes* is a video-recorded catalogue of pictures taken in the former half of this century and collected by a Los Angeles police officer.<sup>9</sup> Each sepia-toned print is supplied with explanatory narration by founder of the Church of Satan, Anton Szandor LaVey, who mutters and stutters awkwardly, in a manner akin to that of Frances B. Gröss bumbling through *Faces of Death*. Occasionally, the commentary will depart its austere oratory and imbue the solemn procession of stills with sumptuous monologues, commencing, "In a tell-tale tableau of futility. . ." or furnishing them with a cosmetic aside; a 'joke'. No matter how gruesome the images are, the stillness of time relegates each print to a safe distance. Echoing LaVey's own background as police photographer and player of the calliope, *Death Scenes* rattles



One of the many dead in *Death Scenes*.



Another of the many dead. *Death Scenes*.

picture after picture to the grandiose organ sounds of Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, and similar. A quick burst of 60s beach music to a collection of car accident shots seems somewhat irreverent by comparison. The prevalent kitschy music – often more suited to a fairground carousel than a catalogue of death – is at times so



cacophonous it deletes the narratory explication altogether. Nevertheless, the sheer power of the photographs propel the production along at an exhilarating rate. The television screen becomes a transient window into perdition.

All manner – and imaginable variations – of death are exhibited. Whether by accident, suicide or murder, the grisly results fill the screen in an inexorable rota of human carnage. Bodies ripped and gutted like ware on a fishmonger's slab. Heads, splayed and voided of contents from under-chin shotgun blasts. Pugilistic corpses burned to black, carbonized statues. Throats cut spine-deep. Dismantled torsos, limbs and heads, are reassembled post-mortem. The brain of a man, incongruously intact, sits on a porch expelled from its skull by a suicidal shotgun detonation. Babies tossed from high-rise apartments to unyielding pavements, others tossed from womb into trash-cans, others strangled with cords, stabbed with knives, smashed with hammers. Rags, gristle and bone are all that remain of two juveniles after finding and toying with dynamite. A severed head – the face serene, relaxed – sits upright in the centre of a desert road; against a tree, the wrecked car from which it was flung. And on it goes, one outlandish fatality succeeding another.

Occasionally, movie clips and trailers are used, perhaps to pad out the programme to achieve an adequate running time. But their inclusion is detrimental to the production. The value of *Death Scenes* derives solely from the snapshots. Viewing them affirms the frailty of the human form. We can see how easily it is broken and destroyed. The film makes no qualms about offering the viewer that coveted glimpse beneath the autopsy sheet. Perhaps it is nothing more than a catalogue of atrocities for the morbidly inquisitive, yet it is also a directory indicative of the nature of the beast. The beast that is part of our society.

Bougas went on to develop similar, but far more restrained, programmes for American television. Under the collective title of *Murderers, Mobsters & Madmen* and suffering the same secondary production values, the series focused on true crime and utilised several sequences from *Death Scenes*.

## *Savage Zone* ~ 198-

Mario Morra

Morra's independent offering to mondo was evidence of the genre's decline in quality. Despite its title, as much running time is given over to tame sexual titillation as it is to savagery. Most of the lurid stock footage is already familiar, seen before in productions such as *Faces of Death II*. Accommodating such nonsensical and utterly unconvincing sequences as the Llama Cult whose members ritually spit fluids in each others' faces, or the battered wives sorority (in which the actors are so inept they cannot even place a sticking plaster correctly on a fake wound) only contributes to the embarrassment.



Hunting humans in *Savage Zone*.

One facet that the film does cover – in a critical attempt to achieve what its title suggests – is man as hunter. As could be expected, the fauna succumbs to man's profanity. In what is supposed to be a customary sacrificial offering, live goats are thrown into a shark-infested ocean to be eaten alive. A band of gun-toting hooligans surround a herd of nomadic elephants and empty their high-powered rifles into each and every animal. To ensure total destruction they stand on the fallen wounded and fire fatal rounds into the animals' heads. There is the usual feigned disgust at such brutalities but, whereas Morra and Climati's previous collaborative mondo efforts satisfied themselves with slow motion re-runs of the animal slaughter, *Savage Zone* rather gives the game away by positioning the camera on the back of the rifles that fire the fatal shots. It seems to have totally escaped Morra that he is condemning himself when he condemns the hunter. After all, *who else is firing the gun?* Man's predatory nature is further demonstrated with the hunting of human quarry. The bodies of Indians, shot down in flight, lie like rows of felled trees in a jungle clearing. One hunter cuts away the scalp of a victim to retain as a memento of his grand day out. For a few moments, *Savage Zone* slips into a roster of genuine human catastrophe with newsreel footage of murder victims, subway accidents, a bloated corpse being collected on a shoreline, dead babies, a frost bitten New York cab driver being pulled from freezing waters, and so on. But then, just as suddenly, it forsakes reality for safe, photogenic faked death: a sequence in which a transsexual lies dead in a flea-ridden hotel bedroom; his/her penis resting several feet away, circled with chalk, lacks the command of the previous bloody devastation. Although much of *Savage Zone* is attributed to trivial reports – for instance, salvaging car windscreens from abandoned vehicles on a sunken ferry – and its sexual coverage being too lame to be satisfactory, the ad campaign focused on the film's minimal death footage. One poster depicted a man carrying a severed head, despite the sequence only appearing in the film for a few brief seconds. Further evidence of the drawing power of death footage.

## *Faces of Death IV ~ 1990*

Conan Le Cilaire

Commencing with a graphic cremation, *F.O.D. IV* denies itself any credibility with the utilization of host Dr Louis Flellis, a bogus neurosurgeon. Suffering a more bizarre visage than Gröss, he advises the viewers of the death of his predecessor, driven insane after featuring in the previous three films. Dr. Flellis has Gröss' ashes sitting on the desk. Following this brief opening statement, Flellis invites the viewer to descend into a world gone mad to study the many faces of death.

Familiarity ensues with a simulated event, during which a nurse is tortured and murdered by a crazed patient in a mental hospital. This weak opening is made more ineffectual by the genuine newsreel footage that follows. Here are the bona fide dead. People electrified on rails, murder victims, suicides, auto and aircrash casualties, a still-living man trapped in the three-inch gap between train and platform. The most harrowing scene, though, is that of a terrorist who becomes the victim of his own criminal plot. An explosive device hidden in the waistband of the man's trousers has detonated accidentally. He lies in the street blasted almost in two, yet he remains alive watching the crowd watching him. In rapid succession, these scenes instill the viewer with a terminal despondency. Nor do these genuine events conform with the non-serious attitude of the commentary.

Deceptive scenes that follow include an imitation accident at a car wrecking plant, in which the casualty suffers an amputated leg. Similar is a laughably inept escapology stunt that results in a weighted spiked object plunging into the face of the performer. So amateurish is this episode that the crudity of Herschel Gordon Lewis' low-budget *The Wizard of Gore* [1963], is more convincing. A bungee dive from a building goes fatally wrong when the student jumping mis-measures the rope. More student perils during a beach party, when a swimmer is caught in the propeller of a passing speedboat. Even more preposterous is the execution of an eastern European at the hands of a military Junta. The victim is tied between four horses and systematically quartered (reminiscent of another H.G. Lewis' picture, *2000 Maniacs* [1964]). Flellis explains the reason for the fatal punishment as being a mere \$18 tax deficit. The fabricated episodes become increasingly futile as we witness a gangland killing.

The murder had been recorded on videotape and seized by police. More recorded crime occurs when a bank robber shoots the manager under the gaze of a security camera, then inadvertently locks himself in the bank vault. The camera duly tapes his slow suffocation. Execution by electric chair is shown in a scene less credible than that simulated in the first *Faces of Death*. An animal handler is attacked by the tiger he is training and loses his arm. Observant viewers will note that the man being playfully mauled and the recumbent limbless casualty are two different people. No effort is made to ensure they wear the same clothing – such is the derision of the producers. An Indonesian family select a cute puppy for lunch. The animal is placed on the kitchen cutting board, next to the vegetables, and disembowelled alive. Chemical pollution, accuses Ffellis, is responsible for the creation of giant leeches, one of which has attached itself to the arm of a swimmer. A primitive ritual sacrifice occurs during which the victim has his heart cut out. FBI surveillance results in a raid on a house used by devil worshipping students. Scattered around the rooms are the dismembered remains of their victims, Satanic bibles, burning candles, and other cultish paraphernalia. The officers also discover a videotape revealing the actual crimes.

As with part *III*, the snuff element is touched upon again in *Faces of Death IV*. First, with the filming of the gangland killing; then, the recording of the mutilation and murder of randomly selected victims. However, the concept has been transformed from that of sexually motivated productions of South American origin – as implied in feature films like *Snuff* and *Hardcore* – to Satanic ritual murders.<sup>10</sup>

## *The Shocks ~ ?*

Kentaro Uchida

A pre-credit sequence has a tear rolling down the cheek of the Statue of Liberty. This compilation of atrocity footage is the Japanese encroachment into the lucrative death market. Consisting of non-stop newsreel, *The Shocks* is an unrelenting, disconsolate trip into hell. People leap from burning apartment blocks and cameras follow their lethal fall, right to the nauseating impact on concrete. A daredevil wingwalker is ground into oblivion as the plane on which he stands

inverts and gets too close to the runway. The madness prevalent in South Africa manifests itself as a scapegoat is chased from his home by an enraged mob of neighbours and scoop-seeking cameraman. When caught, the man is stabbed and stoned to death. Another victim



The Shocks.

is tied to stakes driven in the ground, flattened beneath heavy boulders and finally burned. Assassinations and executions, all horribly real (with the exception of one reconstructed execution by electric chair) retain the bleak mood.

A man leaning over a barrel of flammable contents receives the full force of the ensuing blast in his face. Sport and leisure accidents are represented via toboggan, rodeo, stunt driving (seen from an in-vehicle camera), car and motorcycle racing, and high-board diving. The few survivors of the Air Florida Flight 90 crash are seen once again being pulled from icy waters. Babies teeter between life and death in incubators. Manipulation of authentic footage comes with the Challenger space shuttle disaster. Following take-off, and mapping its brief course through the sky, the camera cuts between the shuttle and the watching crowd. The soundtrack is a swell of delighted screams and cheering. The shuttle then explodes into a ball of flame and the soundtrack stops dead, leaving the camera to silently record the disbelief of the crowd; their pained reaction and weeping. The ill-fated Challenger footage is familiar, but never has the anticipation of death been more potent than in this silent reverie. Elsewhere heated debate on chat-shows culminates in fisticuffs, followed by bouts of anger between racing car drivers, politicians, and matadors. Ridiculously exaggerated sounds accompany each strike of the fist.

Quite bizarre is the manner in which the filmmakers attempt to alleviate the despair generated by the relentless, hardcore anguish: pleasant footage of hang-gliders sailing through spectacular landscapes, surfers cutting wakes on turbulent shores, and semi-naked models strutting on catwalks. Feline hands, with red painted fingernails, load bullets into a revolver and a woman skydiver pulls her rip-cord to free, not a parachute, but her large breasts. Such scenes are inserted at 15-minute intervals, intent on dividing the devastation and suffering into stomachable durations. Of course, it achieves nothing of the sort and instead places the film within the derisive parameters established by the *Faces of Death* series.

# DEATH FILM



# «SPK»

"DESPAIR"

"HUMAN POST MORTEM"



TIRSDAG 3. JANUAR KL.22

BARBUE

*flowers of flesh and blood*

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## 6. Babylon

The advertisement depicted the drawing of a woman suspended by her hands and gagged, her legs dancing on hot coals. The inscription beside the drawing read:

A PRETTY COED HELD CAPTIVE  
TORTURED  
BUTCHERED  
ROASTED ALIVE!  
DOCTOR GORE PRESENTS  
*HAVEN*  
*OF*  
*HORROR*  
FOR MATURE VIEWING.

The accompanying blurb affirmed that *Haven of Horror* was a Vidimax Home Entertainment video release. It continued:

*A pretty coed roasted alive, right before your eyes!*

*Real or fantasy?*

*You be the judge!!!*

Ghastly sights and sounds found only in the macabre underground! After passing out on the roadside, Beth finds herself in what is suppose [sic] to be a hospital room. But, soon, the gruesome [sic] terror begins! Injections, grisly shock treatments, force-feeding, then brought down to the "dungeon" operating room where she undergoes savage medical surgery (her intestines extracted without anesthesia [sic]) while a cannibalistic nurse prepares a flesh eaters gourmet, roast tenderloin a la Beth. See Beth's long, tender, velvet legs roasted to a golden brown in the most graphically shocking "Human Roast" scene ever filmed and on direct VHS color video!! Approx 54 mins. Order 85008. \$17.95

Vidimax were part of a distribution outlet called 'The Macabre Underground' operating from the United States in the mid-1980s (it isn't known whether they still exist). Along with *Haven of Horror*, they also carried titles such as *The New York Centerfold Massacre*, *Starlet Blue* and *The Necrotic*. With many being shot direct to video, most films were exclusive and appear nowhere else outside of the Macabre Underground catalogue. Not even in the form of reviews.

The movies *are* shocking, but rarely in the manner that the advertising intends. Watching them, one is overcome by the cheesiness and unparalleled ineptness of it all. Moreover, even with such limited running times, the films are unbearably dull. What sets the Macabre Underground apart from other similar outlets is the sheer lascivious hostility of the movies they carry. In the Vidimax titles, for instance, nothing happens but torture of girls.

In *The New York Centerfold Massacre*, aspiring models become prey to a psychopath. Echoing the misogynistic bent of Dennis Donnelly's *The Toolbox Murders* [1978], and likewise having the protagonist don a ski mask, *The New York Centerfold Massacre* goes that much further. Scenes depicting death via electric hair-drier, acid film bath, scorching floodlamps ("sizzling against young Carla's tender flesh") are protracted and painful. While advertising for *The Necrotic* notes, of a runaway girl and psychotic doctor, there "is a well done bathtub murder scene"; the Super-8 *Starlet Blue* depicts the "seamy [sic] world of flesh peddling," and despite having "technical



flaws, especially a noisy soundtrack . . . is a collector's must since it will never be released in the mainstream and is pungent."

Like the other Vidimax releases, neither subtlety nor competence are the stronger points of *Haven of Horror*. "Real? Or Fantasy?" the adline runs, but a feature film this most assuredly is. Beth does indeed get her limbs roasted, but the minuscule budget allows for the "graphically shocking" effects work to extend no further than a roll

of aluminium foil wrapped around a chair leg, suspended over a spit. Of the resultant roasting, tanning lotion provides Beth with the expected hue of golden brown.

There was also a Macabre Video compilation by the name of *Olga's Dungeon of Torture*. This featured a little old lady as a host and stretched as far as three volumes, each proffering clips from the same batch of movies over and over again. Each clip would be preceded by a title but, in an obvious ploy to milk what was hardly the most comprehensive catalogue in the world, the titles of the clips wouldn't necessarily be that of the movie they were culled from. In *Olga's Dungeon of Torture Vol I*, for instance, *Haven of Horror* was not only represented by a snippet entitled, naturally, 'Haven of Horror', but also, later on, with a snippet entitled 'Roasting Beth Alive ("Leg roasting scene uncut!")' and again with 'Captive Secretary' and 'Torture Slave'.

Volumes *I* and *II* of *Olga's Dungeon of Torture* also featured the tagged-on 'murder' footage from Allan Shackleton's *Snuff* (which, incidentally, wasn't a Macabre Underground release).

Donald Farmer's once excellent film zine, *The Splatter Times* (the self-proclaimed 'World's Most Violent Magazine!'), marked the end of a three-year absence in 1987 with the arrival of an issue eight. Less than a quarter of its former page count, the latest edition proved a tired excuse to run ads for Farmer's own mail order, Mondo Video. "For complete listing of underground snuff variety and specialized fetish videos," opened the ads, "send SAE to Mondo Video." Essentially providing a list of uncut horror movies and trash classics but rarely honouring customer orders, it wasn't long before small press publications were running editorials charging Mondo Video of fraudulent business practice. In an open letter to Farmer, Rick Sullivan wrote in *Gore Gazette* [#103], "The Tennessee Better Business Bureau is after your heiny so straighten up and fly straight – send customers the tapes they ordered . . ."

Fan publishing goes back a long way. In 1988, *Midnight Marquee* celebrated 25 years with a 200-page, perfect-bound special anniversary issue. Quite some achievement for what started out as the 12-page *Gore Creatures*, selling only 20 copies. And a quick glimpse at the 'Fanzines of a Lifetime' listing in that special *MidMar* edition will give some idea of the scope of the small press world: film,

comics and fiction, everything from *Favourite Westerns & Serial World* to *The Films of John Agar* and *Nosferatu Illustrated*. Of course, not all of them managed to make it through two years let alone 25, and many of the titles were one-shots. During the 1960s, with the influence of the 'mainstream' titles *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Castle of Frankenstein*, film-orientated publications took precedence over those fanzines blending film with other mediums. By the early 1980s, this would change again with the emergence of *Fangoria*, Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic* and, in particular, Bill Landis' *Sleazoid Express*.

Essentially a newsletter to begin with, *Sleazoid Express* was imbued with an almost suicidal devotion to watching bad movies in bad places, and a general irreverence toward practically everything else (the *Sleazoid* masthead was "The largest circulation of anything of its particular type" and had an editorial address that shifted almost every issue). As time went on, the page count increased along with an eclecticism of content: the underage sex fixations of porn director Toby Ross, sex-change epics, trashy books, velour soul, and 'Are Led Zeppelin Faggots' were typical of the later issues. By 1985, it looked as if Landis' smack habit had gotten the better of him and he put out one incredible final *Sleazoid* – no movies, but 10 pages of Joe Monday 'The Story of a Fake Man on 42nd Street' – before disappearing off the face of the planet.

Landis was sitting through movies of a type that, at the time, few people cared about (they would become acquired viewing some years later). More still, he was writing about them. 'Oddity of the Week' in his debut number was the mondo title *Let Me Die a Woman*. By the second issue, Landis was announcing the first of the *Sleazoid Express* parties, in which "The legendary, infrequently shown bad taste classic *Mondo Cane* will be featured . . . I'll be there as DJ, and to introduce the film and answer questions."

Landis hunted down movies – more often than not, seeing them on their first US run. *Savage Man . . . Savage Beast*, he noted, had a special marquee at 42nd Street's Liberty Theatre, but the movie proved to be "a huge disappointment. The only real and revolting footage here found its way into the trailer." On the other hand, *Of the Dead* was "powerful, disturbing, stomach turning" but, unfortunately, "without a distributor and limited to a Museum of Modern Art showing."

The *Sleazoid Express* legacy lives/lived on in the likes of *Gore Gazette*, *Trash Compactor*, *Psychotronic*, *Shock Cinema*, *Killbaby*, *Film Threat*, *Draculina*, *Dead On Arrival*<sup>1</sup> – all movie zines in which attitude takes precedence over the movies. For publications such as *Subhuman*, *Murder Can Be Fun*, *Bizzarrism*, and *ANSWER Me!*, the movies have all but been replaced by a kind of sideways glance at life itself and articles on serial killers, strange behaviour, disasters, religion, sex and death, are the general order.

Incestuous and ever with its ear to the ground, the small press is the one unspoiled voice of media communication. It rarely has to answer to anybody. It does what it does because it wants to. It is the whipping post of rationality, a network where almost anything can happen and often does for no discernable reason (several years before it gets labelled 'transgressive' by the masses).

In *DOA*, in an interview with Hugh Gallagher, editor of *Draculina*, Jeff Queen asked:

JQ: Tell me about the worst letter you've gotten from a reader.

HG: [ . . . ] I've gotten a lot of strange letters over the years, people telling me who their favourite mass murderers were. One guy told me he used to be a hitman in Chicago, was involved in a Satanic cult that sacrificed teenage girls and was involved in the making of three snuff films. One time he sent me photos of girls getting shot in the breasts with various kinds of guns, which I sent back and told him I wasn't interested in that kind of stuff. I'd never seen anything like them before. After establishing his address with me, he never put a return address anywhere on his letters and used to write stuff like "I love animals and would never hurt any, but I love to hunt. . . ." He was also involved in a lot of sexual things; he told me anything I wanted to see on video tape, just tell him and he'd get it for me. He quit writing all at once.

In *Subhuman* [#5], the editorial observed "True gorehounds will enjoy a new cassette distributed by New Age Marketing. *Keeping People Alive* is a 90 minute collection of uncut news accident video showing emergency paramedics in action." In the *Amok Fourth Dispatch* book catalogue, a US army training film called *Basic Autopsy Procedure* is advertised:

The most graphic unaltered autopsy footage we could get our hands on! SLIT SLIT SLIT! Two recently deceased members of our Armed Forces (circa 1960) are the subjects . . . brains exposed, testicles sliced and diced, livers pinched, hearts punctured, and more! The color of the footage is slightly faded in that "high school educational film" sort-of-way, so it is especially disgusting . . . BON APETIT!!!! #0180 \$25.

In 1982, SPK issued their 'music' video, *Despair*. Sold mainly via mail order, *Despair* quickly asserted itself as something of a cult item on the underground when publications such as *Re/Search #10: Incredibly Strange Films* began to plug it. In that volume, Frank Henenlotter, director of *Basket Case*, said: "When I saw the video I thought, 'What a fabulous thing; what a strange way of using music. Who would make a *music video* to such horror – with actual severed heads . . .'"

*Despair* consists of 60 minutes of screeching, heavily distorted guitars, electronics, and various tape and vocal effects. The graphics mutate from a series of lines running up and down the screen, into a seemingly random cut-up of images, like scenes of a sex shop, or an autopsy. The soundtrack drives onward, relentlessly. Sequences showing the mutilation of a dead cat (its eye gouged out and its tongue sliced off) and the unspooling of intestines from a cadaver's gaping abdominal cavity, are intercut with footage of SPK performing live. The frontman, in bondage mask and swastika armband, bites meat from a rancid horse's head. Slides of death camps, brain operations, foetal deformities and pathological specimens take the video to its conclusion and infamous mortuary footage. An individual, seen only as a pair of industrial-gloved hands, manoeuvres a detached head to perform clumsy fellatio on a penis protruding from the severed, lower extremities of a corpse. The head is replaced by a skeletal hand, woven with strings of yellowed tendon and gristle. This appendage simulates masturbation of the grey member.

Hailing from Australia, SPK were one of the first wave of industrial noise groups. Throbbing Gristle's label, Industrial Records, put out a 7" EP of theirs (one track of which, *Slogan*, appears on the video) and rumours abound that band members consisted of ex-insane asylum inmates.<sup>2</sup> The source for several of the autopsy images that occur in *Despair* is a 20-minute professionally shot document of a pathologist demonstrating human post-mortem procedure, footage





*Despair.*

lifted from a video that a UK record company put out. Some later versions of this tape (which became known as 'SPK's *Human Post Mortem*') were made available in two parts: the first part, the 'straight' autopsy film; the other part being the same footage, but treated with cheap visual effects, and silent so that you, the viewer, could overdub your own soundtrack. It has been said that the group denied any responsibility for *Despair* and *Human Post Mortem*.

Other music which has found a companion in extreme visuals is Hijohkaidan, the Japanese performance art and noise-mongers. Hijohkaidan's compilation of studio sessions and live performances, *Live and Confused*, features yet more autopsy footage. Stefan Jaworzyn notes in the *Shock Xpress 1* book, that, "Well, this autopsy footage is actually different (for one it's Japanese) and contains an edit which provides a genuine shock – a cut from some solarised porn to a nude girl of almost the same build as the porno starlet being opened up."

Arguably, shocking for shock's sake is an expression of limitation. Like a fish out of water, flapping aimlessly from one grotesque to another, the culmination of *Despair* and *Live and Confused*'s obstreperous imagery can only flounder under its own shocking weight. At best, *Despair* is a musical showcase in the populist tradition of music videos in that the noise runs secondary to the accompanying images. Perhaps the music is redundant altogether, with the greater part of the audience for such videos hardly comprising of those interested in the noise of SPK and Hijohkaidan.

G.G. Allin, who since 1978 toured the US billing himself as the "sickest, most decadent rocker of all time," punctuated sub-standard Johnny Thunders riffs with lyrics about rape and bestiality, while in concert engaged in acts of physical profanity. As well as self-mutilation, Allin would excrete on stage, gobble it up and spit it out. He was arrested an estimated 52 times, most recently for slicing a groupie's breasts. His threat to commit suicide in front of an audience never transpired as he died alone following a drug overdose in 1993.

"Sometimes, in a paroxysm of contempt for the audience (which is fairly shockproof by now, but likes to be titillated), it tries to achieve catharsis through an overload of disgust. The problem with such blood-and-guts spectacles, as anyone who has seen one can attest, is that the promised catharsis never happens." So writes Robert Hughes of live 'actions' in *The Shock of the New*. It could be a comment on *Despair*, *Live and Confused*, or any one of G.G. Allin's shows, but it isn't. It's about Art. Hughes is writing about Art and, in particular, Hermann Nitsch. Yet, for all the pontificating and integrity, the violent works of performance artist Nitsch are no less shocking than those of SPK or Hijohkaidan or G.G. Allin. Forewarned Nitsch:

On 4 June 1962, I shall disembowel, tear and pull to pieces a dead lamb. This is a manifest action (an 'aesthetic' substitute for a sacrificial act), the sense and necessity of which will become clear after a study of the theory of the OM Theatre project. . .

Arrested and tried for his work more than once in more than one country, Nitsch has made actions with the most extreme sado-erotic images.

. . . Through my artistic production (a form of the mysticism of being), I take upon myself the apparent negative, unsavoury, perverse, obscene, the passion and the hysteria of the act of sacrifice so that YOU are spared the sully, shaming descent into the extreme. I am the expression of all creation. I have merged into it and identified myself with it. All torment and lust, combined in a single state of unburdened intoxication, will pervade me and therefore YOU. The play-acting will be a means of gaining access to the most 'profound' and 'holy' symbols through blasphemy and desecration. The blasphemous and anthropologically determined view of existence in which grail and phallus appear as two mutually necessary extremes.

Nitsch conceived his Orgies & Mysteries Theatre – his 'abjection theatre' – in 1957, but not for several years did he perform his first public action. Such "shaming descent" in front of an often bemused audience would consist of the pouring of blood and egg yolks over the genitals of young boys, or the lacerating of raw meat, disembowelment of slaughtered animals, and trampling upon entrails. The performers would then pour the muck over one another, with the whole event lasting anything up to three hours.

The OM Theatre was the culmination of a number of elements in post-war Viennese art: the 'action/destruction' paintings of Arnulf Rainer; neo-Dada sound-poems and action-pieces by H.G. Artmann, Gerhardt Ruhm, and others. Filmmaker Kurt Kren, an integral part of the Vienna Group's activities, made in 1967 *Reel III 16/67*, a creative documentation of the Destruction in Art performances of Günter Brus and Otto Mühl. In these performances, the use of the body's 'lower functions' are central to the idea of forcing the boundaries of art. *Reel III 16/67* is also aptly named 'The Eating, Drinking, Pissing & Shitting Film'.

As well as him defecating in public, other performances by Günter Brus entailed self-mutilation and coprophagy; while Otto Mühl, in the performance piece *Libi* [1969], positioned himself so that an egg broken into the vagina of a menstruating girl would drip into his mouth. The title of Mühl's event at the 'Kunstmarkt' show in Cologne in 1969 was *The Death of Sharon Tate*. In 1974, in the authoritative study *Film as a Subversive Art*, Amos Vogel cited Mühl as being possibly "the most scandalous filmmaker working in cinema today." Mühl's films are based on his notorious 'Materialaktionen', live happenings involving real acts of sexual violence and defilement. In *Sodoma*, the most famous of his films, the action entails copulation, fellatio, masturbation, urination, the tying up of participants (mainly women), the insertion of various fluids or objects into vaginas, pumps attached to penises, and coprophilia.

Robert Delford Brown staged a Meat Show, in 1964, New York City. This took place in a cold storage locker, with hanging fabric sheets creating individual rooms. A mirror-ball in the ceiling bathed the place in light, perfume was doused everywhere, and pigs' heads, cows' livers, hearts, and other animal parts furnished the chambers. The public was ushered in wearing white coats. Other actions include Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* [1964], an intermingling of semi-nudity with blood, dead chickens and fish. Chris Burden had himself shot in the arm in 1971. *Sailor's Meat* [1975] is film of artist Paul McCarthy in drag, fucking raw meat with a hotdog sausage hanging from his anus. Joe Coleman smashed a wine bottle over his head, bit the heads off live rats, and threatened the Kitchen audience with a shotgun, in NYC in 1981. Independent film also exists of a sheep carcass being mutilated and gutted in an open field, the assailant/artist then bathing his own naked form in the still warm offal.

Early in 1991, actor Charlie Sheen and a close friend, found themselves in possession of a copy of a film of Asian origin rumoured to contain actual snuff footage. Having their doubts about such a claim, the two were horrified to discover they could not convincingly explain away the atrocities as special effects work, and they called the FBI. Asked to relinquish the cassette, Special Agent Dan Codling informed Sheen that the FBI and the Japanese police were already involved in the case. The tape was traced back to Chas. Balun, editor of *Deep Red* and other film related publications, who

fiercely contended that the film was a clever assimilation and did *not* contain any real torture or murder. "There is not *one* scene of mayhem that couldn't have been effectively rendered by a journeyman FX artist," he said in a special edition of *Deep Red*. Fortunately for Balun, his assertions were proved correct by FBI experts.

*Flower of Flesh and Blood*, the film in question, hails from Japan. It is part of a series of films known collectively as *Guinea Pig*. For a culture that is believed to have ushered in special gore-soaked versions of Hammer films and instigated the popularity of *Faces of Death*, the *Guinea Pig* films would seem a natural, almost inevitable exorbitance. In countries around the world they have met with a storm of protest and condemnation, and are banned outright virtually everywhere. Many think *Flesh and Blood* to be a genuine snuff film. Mike Accomando comments of it in *Dreadful Pleasures* [#1], "The special effects are really good. Almost too good . . . A few scenes left my stomach feeling like a broken Slinky." While in Britain, a copy seized at Customs spurred a court case and the headlines 'DEATH CRAZE MAN'S SNUFF MOVIE SHAME' [see chapter 8].

*Guinea Pig 2: Flower of Flesh and Blood* is the episode that has been stirring much of the controversy. That this is a series and this particular episode only number 2, is a point usually overlooked by the media; when the press and the underground speak of 'Guinea Pig', it is more often than not *Flower of Flesh and Blood* they are referring to.

The film opens with the abduction of the girl in a park. To this point, the camera has been the assailant, chasing the girl – now, it pulls back to reveal the figure of a man, exasperated, standing over his unconscious prey. The camera turns on the girl, a red shoe to one side, as the credits roll accompanied by music. Fades. The girl comes round, finding herself fully clothed but gagged and bound to a bed. She struggles. The prominent sound of dripping water lends to the scene an ethereal quality. A peculiar rasping noise draws the girl's attention (and the camera) slowly to the other end of the room where a man stands, his back turned. The camera pans round the Samurai-clad figure and shows him to be sharpening a knife, the sound of the blade on stone unnaturally loud on the soundtrack. He takes a live chicken from a box and cuts its head off. The sequence is perpetrated via a multitude of edits that conclude with the animal lying headless

on the floor (it is not a real chicken; the blood issuing during its decapitation was supplied via the knife blade). The Samurai administers a drug to the girl after caressing her thigh for a moment, and picks up a pair of shears, clacking them loudly to himself. He then cuts through the victim's clothing. The scene fades upon him reaching the underwear. When the scene returns, a white sheet covers the victim. The Samurai raises a bradawl and plunges it into the girl (not sure where: penetration of flesh is depicted in extreme close-up; reaction shots follow). He mumbles to himself before commencing to slice off her left hand. Again, as with each subsequent mutilation shot, the deed is performed in isolated close-up, with intermittent edits to the face of the Samurai and the victim, dazed, delirious. Blood spatters as the killer struggles to break the hand away at the wrist. It is an effective sequence, but not wholly convincing. He slices off the other hand, then commences on the arms. When gristle proves a problem, he takes a hammer and chisel to ease removal. Again, despite it being effective, the whole attitude of the arm hacking seems wrong. A heartbeat wells up on the soundtrack. With both hands and arms removed (the film doesn't show the second arm amputation), the Samurai turns his attention to the lower extremities. He saws off one leg, lifts it to his face and caresses it longingly. The film doesn't bother to reveal the removal of the other leg, but instead, shoots straight into the next sequence. Drawing the sheet up the limbless, still living body, the camera manages to avoid the genital area by focusing on the victim's navel (her breasts remain covered by the sheet). The Samurai incises the torso with a scalpel; a synthesized orchestration accompanies. As he prods his hands into the wound, a cutaway reveals a red trickle running from the girl's mouth. When he thrusts his hands deep inside, the girl vomits a mouthful of blood. Her head rolls sideways and she dies. The Samurai, meanwhile, pulls from the abdomen a handful of intestine and organ. He then raises a machete and, in slow motion, hacks off the head. The bloody, almost indistinguishable – and not wholly convincing – head spins through the air and comes to rest on the floor. Samurai props it up on the bed and enucleates an eyeball with a dinner spoon. He sucks on it, cross-eyed with delight. Finally, in a clichéd, post-coitus gesture, the Samurai smokes a cigarette. With him singing a song, the camera then wanders around the room, revealing it to be full of death: limbs and organs sitting on shelves in pickling jars; severed hands float in

a bath of bubbling liquid; a half-skeletal head sits in the corner, fat worms wriggling through an eye socket; another head, severed, rather prosthetic-looking, sits in another corner. The Samurai dumps his latest acquisitions into the limb bath. The scene fades to reveal the city once again. Ahead is another girl, another potential victim. Freeze-frame.

The *Guinea Pig* series totals seven episodes of varying length. Some contention exists as to the actual running order, and the English titles are literal – often conflicting – translations, making satisfactory correlation difficult.<sup>3</sup> While all the films share a similar air of detachment, episodes outside of volume 2 are of a more esoteric nature. Other films include *Unabridged Agony*, in which a woman is captured and tied to a chair. The tortures depicted in this episode are that much more disturbing than those in *Flower* simply because they are less excessive, less colourful. Rather than dismemberment, the woman is slapped, kicked, tortured with high-frequency sound and has fingernails removed [more details on this episode in the notes]. Another film, *Live Mermaid in a Manhole*, follows an artist who – inexplicably – finds a mermaid in a sewer, and takes her back to his studio. He commences to paint her, but it soon becomes clear that she's not well. Engrossed in his canvas, the mermaid is seen to slowly rot away. Lengthy close-ups offer rotten flesh falling away, revealing the maggot infestation that lies beneath. The artist continually updates his painting.

Particularly in the case of *Guinea Pig 2*, the eccentricity of the series (one film is a short comedy about suicide) and the isolating irreverence toward the viewer (things happen without explanation) makes for disturbing viewing, regardless of bodily disfigurement or mutilation. Yet, in lieu of such distractions as script and storyline, the parade of viciousness is ultimately quite tedious; to sit through four minutes of this would be no mean feat, let alone 45.

*Guinea Pig 2* follows all the traditional motifs of what a snuff film should look like. That is, the setting is confined to the one room (apart from the opening and closing shots, which, incidentally, are the most movie-like moments of the episode); the victim is bound and helpless; it looks cheap; the quality is invariably poor.<sup>4</sup> No matter, the film is obviously not 'real'. Special effects can be rendered all the more effective by camera close-ups, cut-aways or hiding a multitude

of sins behind the Samurai's ill-placed elbow. Indeed, another of the *Guinea Pig* films is 'A Making Of' episode, detailing special effects work from the previous instalments. One sequence shown is that from *Flesh and Blood* where the Samurai cuts the girl's hand off and, dismembered, it contracts into a fist. Behind the scenes, the crew can be seen working diligently. One man manipulates the fingers of the severed hand via a series of wires. When the take is over, the girl bursts into laughter.

The film itself deploys a technique that immediately throws into dispute any argument of genuine snuff material. Not only are there constant point-of-view shots as seen by killer and even the chicken (!), but there are tracking shots, panning shots, cut-aways and edits. There is also a musical soundtrack and audio effects. Another give-away is the intrusive Japanese sensitivity towards nudity: despite the butchery, the drape never slips from the victim and her nakedness is never revealed. Why, even when the killer pulls aside the sheet and goes to work on the torso, a spillage of intestines conveniently cloaks the offending pubic bush. But to get things into true perspective, *Guinea Pig 2* has credits.

As well as Ruggero Deodato having to face court action in Italy with regard his *Cannibal Holocaust* and its questionable treatment of man and animal, there are a number of other instances where a movie's brutalities have been cause for concern, bringing the director under scrutiny. In Lucio Fulci's *A Lizard In a Woman's Skin* [1971], a thriller concerning a lesbian murderer who kills in order to keep her terrible secret a secret, there is a dream sequence in which eviscerated dogs are seen still whimpering, still kicking. The sequence proved realistic enough to land Fulci in court, narrowly escaping a possible two-year sentence when Carlo Rambaldi, the special effects man behind the movie, presented a twitching mechanical dog as proof that no animal was actually harmed.

In *The Hunchback of the Morgue* [1972], Spanish exploitation veteran Paul Naschy stars as a deformed, sex-obsessed mad scientist's assistant, occupying his time by lurching around town and providing his master with experiment fodder: kidnapped girls and dismembered body parts. A typical Hispanic hotchpotch, *The Hunchback of the Morgue* landed director Javier Aguirre in hot water when it was deemed that the corpses in the morgue were real and, furthermore,





Authentic severed head. *Hunchback of the Morgue*.

were being hacked-up. In their gushing review of the movie, the now defunct magazine *Demonique* (who managed to feature Paul Naschy at length and in each of their four issues), enthused:

*The Hunchback of the Morgue* is a great film; credit to such amazing devotion and suffering on the part of Naschy and director Javier Aguirre. Briefly, it deals with an unfortunate hunchback's love for a beautiful girl. The hunchback is the servant of a stereotype mad scientist who even has a mutated spinach monster locked up in his basement for good measure. At the scientist's command, the creature jumps out of his cell and attacks the bad guys of the film. Here, as ever, Naschy – not unlike Lon Chaney, Sr. – suffered greatly for his work. A well known example of this is the scene in which Naschy, as the hunchback, is attacked by hundreds of flaming rats. While other actors would demand some sort of optical effect or at least, domesticated rats, for the sake of realism Naschy demanded that real, wild rats be used. In addition to being put aflame, Naschy made certain the rodents were hungry so the scene would be that much more realistic. This resulted in

Naschy being bitten several times, but when viewing this part of the movie it is obvious his efforts paid off: not only is the scene genuinely frightening, but it's enough to make a die-hard fan feel a bit queasy. If this wasn't enough, to assure authenticity in another scene, a real corpse was obtained from a Spanish morgue and beheaded in front of the camera.

With as reviled a filmography as Joe D'Amato has, to label any one of his movies as being particularly repellent is not a condemnation to be taken lightly. But D'Amato's 1979 picture *Beyond the Darkness* is particularly repellent. The story concerns a young taxidermist by the name of Francesco who turns his skills to his recently deceased fiancée, whom he still loves very much. Observed embalming his beloved, Francesco feels it necessary to first pull the fingernails from an inquisitive hitchhiker before strangling her. He then brings home a number of hapless girls, all of whom are duly dispatched when unable to bring themselves to sharing a bed with a dead fiancée. Not content with merely a reprehensible story line, D'Amato pads the movie with actual autopsy footage. Furthermore, when the hitcher is caught spying, Francesco's unflinching removal of the girl's



*Beyond the Darkness.*

fingernails is widely rumoured to have been accomplished on an actual cadaver . . . although it evidently isn't.

It can only be guessed that in cases like the above, dead people make for a cheaper 'special effect'.

Many feature films have utilized actual death footage, as if doing so might attach some kind of plausibility to a meandering plot. Way back in 1938, Clarke Gable and Walter Pidgeon starred in *Too Hot To Handle*, a movie concerning the exploits of scoop-seeking cameramen. One sequence uses genuine newsreel footage showing a foundering cargo ship being abandoned by its crew. Sailors can be seen lowering themselves down the side of the ship into a waiting lifeboat. As the airborne cameraman closes in, the hull of the vessel explodes obliterating all those seeking rescue. Alberto De Martino's *Holocaust 2000* [1977], an *Omen* cash-in starring Kirk Douglas, opens to the starving and the dead of a Third World country. George Schenck juxtaposed the themes of two classic jungle shockers, *The Most Dangerous Game* and *The Island of Lost Souls*, to come up with *Superbeast* [1972], a movie in which a doctor's aversion therapy experiments cause criminals to become monstrous throwbacks, or 'superbeasts'. A renowned pathologist is flown in to perform an autopsy on one of the creatures, granting Schenck that opportunity to edit in film depicting actual abdomen slicing and intestine removal. The autopsy of a human cadaver was briefly seen in Alain Resnais' *Providence* [1977], making some members of the arthouse crowd rather uneasy. Juan Logar pulled out all the stops with his *Autopsy* [1973], an oddity of colossal proportions. A Vietnam veteran decides that the only way to satiate his guilt complex over the war is to film an autopsy. "But an autopsy's repulsive," his wife decries. Exactly. A friend dies and the obsessive veteran makes his way to pathology, cine camera in hand. An extraordinary combination, *Autopsy* splices together feature film narrative with stock footage and documentary-style interviews. The movie opens in Vietnam and familiar film of napalm victims running from a burning village. The pacifist narrator is wounded and returns home. Hitting upon his unique subscription to peace, he then goes into the streets and casually asks passers-by the question, "What do you think of death?" The autopsy is long and lingering, but when it's over, his anguish resolved, the veteran stands on a beach facing the setting sun and announces, "I think that this very night a 1,000 babies will be born. I think that the sun will keep

nourishing our earth.”

Another Vietnam vet who suffers recurring stock footage flashbacks is Joe, the seething misogynist of the hardcore porn picture *Forced Entry* [197-]. Director Helmuth Richler couldn't have come up with a more alarming piece of fuck-cinema if he tried, what with Joe (Tim Long, who also has a bit-part in Doris Wishman's *Let Me Die a Woman* wearing the same jewellery) humiliating and violating one woman after another. In one sequence, Joe follows a woman home, breaks into her house (spending a *long* time sneaking up the stairs to where she's taking a shower) and forces himself upon her. Sodomizing her to footage of bound and hooded Vietnamese suspects, Joe asks, "Is it startin' to bleed a little in there, lady?" She moans, sobs. Joe concludes, "You don't know what bleeding is . . . You don't know what bleeding is." When he comes, it is interspersed with a barrage of quickfire imagery, of dead women and children, bombs going off. Introductory blurb in *Forced Entry* accuses Vietnam – the legacy of confusion, fear and rage – for Joe's "desperate need to find a victim."

Autopsy footage, along with the employment of actual cadavers in other scenes, is a requisite of T.F. Mous' *Man Behind the Sun* [1987]. This Chinese movie – wrongly labelled a mondo film in some quarters – is a dramatic reconstruction of events surrounding 731 Squadron, a group of Japanese scientists experimenting with biological warfare during World War II. Chinese and western citizens are imprisoned in camps and subject to all manner of truly appalling experimentation. One woman, after her baby is snatched from her arms and buried in the snow, is left outdoors surrounded by a rampart of ice-blocks. Tied to a wooden frame, water is constantly poured over her outstretched arms. When the limbs are deemed suitably encrusted, the ice is smashed off with a bayonet. She is led back into the compound and instructed to plunge her arms into a tank of heated water. The experiment controller tugs at her skin which sloughs from the bone like gloves. The woman screams at the skeletal limbs before her. A mother and child are wheeled into an airtight, windowed chamber into which noxious gas is pumped. The onlookers take notes as the occupants slowly choke and perish. A man is placed in a decompression chamber, his body sweats and swells until finally, it prolapses violently through the anus discharging three-metres of squirming gut. A drunken old labourer sings as he keeps the



incinerator burning with an endless procession of dead bodies (actual bodies look to make up a good percentage of those he slovenly throws to the fire).

With substantial backing behind it – this is no low-budget exploitation flick – it is difficult to comprehend that the studio or backers responsible knew what it was exactly they were paying for here. Even as a propaganda film – in the same sense that, say, Marvin Chomsky's *Holocaust* could be classed as propaganda – highlighting Chinese suffering at the hands of the Japanese, it is hard to imagine a major studio financing *Man Behind the Sun*. It is brutal, jarring, and absolutely depressing. The one character that is allowed to draw on the viewer's sympathy – a naïve young boy – is quickly cut down to size (the reason for the sympathetic allusion in the first place?) in a scene that sees jovial doctors administering an anaesthetic and eviscerating him while still alive. With the boy's chest and stomach opened wide, the doctors pluck out the still beating heart. The wasted body may not be that of the *actual* boy from a few moments earlier,

healthy and playing ball, but *it is* the real body of a child of similar age and appearance, and his open chest *does* reveal a still beating heart.

Nonfiction filmmaker Frederick Wiseman says of his work, "The way I try to make a documentary is that there's no separation between the audience watching the film and the events in the film." Unlike those of his contemporaries, Wiseman's nonfiction films do not choose to personalize any one man, but rather concentrate on an institution or process, and through that comment on those men within it. Neither does Wiseman utilize narration or music.

*Titicut Follies* [1967], his first film, is shot within the walls of the modern-day Bedlam of Bridgewater State Hospital – a hospital for the criminally insane. Here, warders interrogate inmates, who are often made to walk around naked. One man is constantly provoked, the warders knowing full well that doing so will switch calm and good-manners to violent rage. "Jim, Jim, is your room clean, Jim? Jim, is it clean?" they continually taunt. Indeed, many of the warders seem to be of a less sound disposition than those in their care. When one inmate won't eat his food he is force-fed through a nasal tube. The doctor pouring the slop into the funnel has a cigarette perched precariously on his lips, ash about to follow the liquid sustenance. As the camera zooms into the recipient's face, a startling edit shows the extreme close-up of the face of a dead man, on a slab, being prepared by a mortician. Back to the force-feeding: the doctor, still pouring, jokes that the slop ought to be whisky. The mortician pads the man's eye sockets with cotton wool and seals the eyelids shut. *Titicut Follies* incensed the institution's supervisors enough to land Wiseman with a charge of violating the rights of the patients and with breach of contract.

Wiseman's *Meat*, made in 1976, chases the process of meat production: that of turning cattle into steaks, chops and hamburgers. The film opens to the romantic imagery of cowboys herding cattle on an open plain. It then shifts to a real and sterile world as cattle are herded into mammoth pens, injected, disinfected and branded. Nor is their feed the lush greenery of countless acres, but computer designated and supplied courtesy of a bulldozer. The animals are fattened for the film's centrepiece: the slaughterhouse. Here, they are decapitated, gutted, chopped and ground. As per usual in Wiseman's

work – and unlike Franju’s horribly graphic *The Blood of the Beasts* – the actual killing is glossed over for the procession of it all; the unstopping conveyor belt regularity. The film closes on the image of a truck leaving the packaging factory, and its cargo of individually sealed chops.

In *Hospital* [1969], made at New York’s Metropolitan Hospital, Wiseman chronicles human suffering through a vast network of health-care. Roaming each of the departments and wards, the camera captures the sight of a young man suffering a bad mescaline trip screaming “I don’t want to die” as he vomits out his guts. Elsewhere, a terrified woman tries to comfort her dying mother. Psychotic homosexuals, smack addicts, bewildered alcoholics, cries for help – all manner of strangeness is to be found wandering up and down the corridors. An attendant comments “It don’t make sense.” Often deemed his best work, *Hospital* is but a logical precursor to Wiseman’s pinnacle achievement: the six-hour observation, *Near Death* [1989].

Set within the intensive care unit at Boston’s Beth Israel Hospital, *Near Death* slips casually into the lives and conversations of those who pass through its doors. For these people, the world would seem to exist on a kind of existential plateau, forever a fine line between life and death. In hushed tones, staff discuss the best prescription for any given patient; families sit waiting, tearful, vacant. There is a sobriety and tranquillity about the thing that is enhanced by the monochrome film. As if treading hallowed ground, the viewer cannot help but be suckered into its sense of mortality. And, as the six hours roll on, this feeling becomes all-enveloping. Like a constant vigil, without introduction, the characters and faces become familiar to the viewer. There are no titles, no narrative, no dissolves or fade-outs (the passing of time is indicated by the external shot: Hospital in day; hospital at night), everything rolls on regardless of who’s living or dying.

Richard Meran Barsam writes in *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, “Wiseman is fascinated with the internal operation of institutions, but instead of showing *how* they work, he tries to show *why* they don’t.” This is perfectly true of Wiseman’s films up until 1974 when Barsam’s book was published, but not *Near Death*. With *Near Death*, it is a case of ‘*can’t* work’ as opposed to ‘*don’t*’. As one of the doctors ponders, “God decides, we don’t decide”.

Wiseman will make an edit from the noise and bustle of general hospital activity to the silence and solitude of nameless individuals standing over a motionless patient. Sometimes, when the focus of attention is neither families nor staff, the distant pulse of life-support machines takes precedence. Every now and then, a piercing bleep: the familiar intonation of a 'flatline'. The sound is unnerving, but conversations do not falter and no one seems to notice (soon, we won't): it can only be the sounds of other machines, other rooms, other lives and responsibilities.

In many sequences, the doctors stand around in conference and ponder a particular case. The language is totally alien; medical jargon. It is at once distancing and reassuring. It is this assertiveness and positiveness which draws the sick to this place. In another sequence, the same doctors seem apprehensive. "What is terminally ill? There's no blood test for terminal. It's like: 'what is competence?'" Another muses, "Are we managing people to stay alive, or managing their deaths?"

There is a strong measure of human failing and human compassion. Technically, the two should balance one another out. But they don't, and when the film ends it's something of a relief. *Near Death* is too *unobtrusive* for comfort. We, the viewer, don't really want to be here and most certainly not this close.

Several months after Woodstock, in December of 1969, some 300,000 people gathered in the bone-dry hills of northern California for a free concert by the Rolling Stones. The setting was Altamont Speedway, and it was everything that Woodstock was not.

Altamont was cold night and speed to Woodstock's sunshine and grass. It was the end of peace and love and shit, the end of the 60s. Governed by Hell's Angels – whom the Stones had hired as security guards – any festive Woodstock spirit dragged over from Yasgur's farm was soon quenched beneath a threatening presence. Violence erupted around the stage area and the Angels made quick work of those who had flowers in their hair. Unabated, the violence culminated with Meredith Hunter, a young black man, being murdered.

David and Albert Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin's documentary of the Rolling Stones and the Altamont concert, *Gimme Shelter* [1970], was released to theatres with the auspicious ad-line, "*The*



*music that thrilled the world . . . and the killing that stunned it!"*

The film was not at all as exploitative as the campaign that preceded it.

Largely regarded as something of a break-through in quality live Rock recordings – both in terms of visuals and sound – *Gimme Shelter* captures the Stones in almost every phase of backstage and onstage activity during their 1969 concert tour of America. The film opens with scenes from the Stones' penultimate gig at Madison Square Garden, watched on a moviola by the band themselves, whose comments and expressions are intercut with the original footage. Scenes from this concert (which includes one number by Ike and Tina Turner) are interspersed with scenes of lawyer Melvin Belli<sup>5</sup> attempting to set up a final, charity performance at Altamont. Due to the unexpected size of the audience – and the reluctance of the local citizens to provide space for it – there is a last minute change of location and a struggling mass of organisers, motorcyclists and fans are seen surging into the Speedway arena. Around the stage area; over the stage. Support band Jefferson Airplane perform a couple of numbers and the chaos increases. At loggerheads with those around the stage, the Airplane's Marty Balin leaps down mid-performance to tackle some of the Hell's Angels and is beaten unconscious. As darkness descends, the Stones arrive via a path cut by the Angels. After the first couple of numbers it becomes clear that the Altamont crowd is heading out of control, with fights constantly breaking out around the auditorium. On the stage itself, the band play under the unmoving shadow of a stoned biker, who stares 'protectively' at Mick Jagger and his effeminate posturing throughout the songs. The audience becomes wilder. Interruptions and fighting are continuous. The camera turns to the Angels that surround Meredith Hunter and the fracas that will lead to a fatal stabbing.

Next to that of his power to excite, Jagger's attempt at satiating the crowd is frail and hopeless; his plea of "Who's fighting and what for?" is met with more fighting. Later, stunned and disbelieving, he and Charlie Watts will watch rushes of Altamont and the on-screen murder. The film on the moviola shows Hunter pulling a gun as a knife flashes into him. Jagger's detachment on stage, compared to his concern here, when faced with the film, has the curious implication that it is the film which is at 'fault', that it is the Maysles Brothers who are responsible because they have committed the action to

celluloid. Their film may be totally objective, but at the very least, in filming it they have made the action *exist more*.

Despite never asking questions, merely presenting an audio and visual record of a Rock band and a Rock concert, *Gimme Shelter* cannot help but be moved by the stabbing. It replays the sequence twice in slow motion as if this be some head-bowed acknowledgement of a limitation to objectivity. In the trial of the Hell's Angel accused of the murder, *Gimme Shelter* went some way in acquitting itself when called as evidence in court.

If there remained any doubt that Altamont finished what Woodstock had begun, a passage from Barsam:

Repeated observations of New York audiences indicated that many young people sat through several consecutive showings of *Woodstock*, but that many of them left after one showing of *Gimme Shelter* with a look of pain, not joy, on their faces. Rock was their music, and film was their art; here was a film that fused the two in a new, disturbing way, and it was all the more disturbing because it recorded a reality, not a romp.



Meredith Hunter about to die in *Gimme Shelter*.

Several cuts had to be made in Barbet Schroeder's film about Major General Idi Amin, President of Uganda. The French production, made with the cooperation of General Amin, had audiences roaring with laughter in Paris where it was hailed the best comedy in town. By the time *Général Idi Amin Dada* [1974] – subtitled *No One Can Run Faster than a Rifle Bullet* – reached Britain, Amin had enforced 141 seconds of cuts in the 90 minute film by threatening the 150 French nationalists living in Uganda.

Following a meeting in Kampala, the film's producer Jean-Francois Chauvel, is said to have agreed to the cuts because the version seen by General Amin, who had a contractual right of prior review, did not correspond exactly to the version that was distributed. Reports said that, although General Amin was pleased when the film was released, he became incensed upon hearing that audiences were laughing at him. One of the parts excised was the opening scene, showing a public execution along with commentary noting that the Amin Government had ordered the deaths of thousands since it came to power in 1970. Another of the sequences removed had President Amin telling his cabinet, "You must not be weak like a woman. You must show determination and make the people love their President, their Government, their administrators, and make the world love Uganda." He continued, "Do not be like our Foreign Minister here, who didn't make the world love Uganda enough." Following this speech, the narrator reported that the body of Foreign Minister Michael Ondanga was found 10 days later floating down the Nile and that his replacement, Princess Baya, was a former model.

Swiss director Schroeder<sup>6</sup> is quoted as saying of *Général Idi Amin Dada*, "I wanted to make a film showing the ugliness of power," but, the *MFB* says, "Instead, the director conducts something of a travelogue . . . and, even in its uncut state, ignores almost entirely the torture and thousands of executions that have taken place since the General's coup."

Scenes that had them laughing in Paris include General Amin presenting his paratroopers training on children's playground slides; telling a class of medical students that they should maintain the confidence of patients by not allowing themselves to get drunk; that the United States should be governed by a black President and that the Secretary of State should be black and that all black Americans should learn Swahili.



Général Idi Amin Dada.

*After Mein Kampf* is a showcase for the curious views of one Ralph Porter. It's a semi-documentary inasmuch as it depicts Adolf Hitler's rise to power, the methods he used to build the Nazi war machine, and the subsequent atrocities perpetrated against humanity. However, Porter continually subjugates the facts around the possibility emphasized in the film's opening: that Hitler may still be alive. As speculative celluloid – of a kind that includes Harald Reinl's *Chariots of the Gods* [1969] and Richard Friedenberg's *The Bermuda Triangle* [1978], – *After Mein Kampf* would seem to be clinging to the merest notion of factual documentary with its rather top-heavy iconoclasm, and kneading of fact. So too, the likes of *Der Ewige Jude/The Eternal Jew*.

German propaganda during the second world war identified two sets of enemies – the enemy within (the Jews) and the enemy without (the British). Although it wasn't until the outbreak of war in 1939 that the German film industry embarked on production of specifically anti-Semitic and anti-English tracts, there remains little doubt that three anti-Semitic films released in 1940 represent the government's cinematic effort to prepare the German public for the full-scale

**GREATEST SHOCK SCENE EVER FILMED!**

 **THE REAL  
UNCENSORED  
TRUTH OF  
HITLER'S HELL!**

**AFTER  
MEIN  
KAMPE**

**GIRLS USED FOR SCIENTIFIC  
EXPERIMENTS WITH NEAR DEAD  
PRISONERS OF WAR!**

**SEE! HITLER'S SADISTS  
LEAVE THEIR SHAMELESS  
MARK!**

**SEE! THE RAVAGES OF HITLER  
THE RAPE OF THE WORLD!**

**SEE! The concentration camps of  
Majdanek, Dachau and Auschwitz**

**HITLER IN DISGUISE  
IS HE STILL ALIVE!**

extermination of the Jews, the logical culmination of the race policies of the Third Reich.

Both being feature films, Erick Waschneck's *Die Rothschilds* and Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* – a key exhibit in the post-war trials – depicted the Jewish people as inordinately wealthy, powerful,



*The Eternal Jew.*

thoroughly amoral and insensitive, rapists even. Yet, no matter how brilliantly either film orchestrated the themes and archetypes of Nazi propaganda and fanned the flames of hatred, none could match *The Eternal Jew* for sheer, insidious vehemence. This 45-minute 'documentary', compiled by Dr. Fritz Hippler and labelled by one commentator as "probably the most evil film ever made," is a systematic denunciation of every aspect of Jewry. In it, Dr. Hippler conducts an illustrated lecture, detailing everything from physical appearance (always scruffy and ugly) to "the problems of world Jewry."

The truly horrendous slaughter scenes which follow were indeed powerful, leading the Nazis to restrict showings including them to men only; women were shown a censored version. Footage of a grinning Jewish butcher pulling out the entrails of a writhing cow, its legs tied and throat slit, reinforced the hateful message of *The Eternal Jew* – "Jews are less than human." The segment clearly served as an analogy to the Nazi 'Final Solution' – the total annihilation of the Jewish people. Note the final passage of narration: "Just as it dealt with this cruel slaughter (the Nazis outlawed koshering techniques), so the Germany of National

Socialism will deal with the whole race of Jewry."

*The Eternal Jew* was shown in 66 Berlin movie houses alone, but was also dubbed and imported throughout Europe to stir up anti-Semitism and justify the upcoming Holocaust. After the war, *The Eternal Jew* came to be regarded as too depraved for public showings. Today the film is rarely screened. Although it makes observations that would today be laughable (the Jews are corrupters of society for liking modern art and jazz; Albert Einstein is called "the Relativity Jew"), *The Eternal Jew* is still considered to be one of the most dangerous examples of propaganda ever produced. [Source unknown.]

One version of poster for *The Eternal Jew* includes a shot from Fritz Lang's *M* [1931]: Peter Lorre as the child murderer. Lang, incidentally, had fled Hitler's Germany for Paris in 1933.

A Nazi propaganda film, allegedly on its way to South America, was intercepted and, courtesy of Warner Brothers, released into US theatres as *This Is Your Enemy*. Even with a tagged-on English commentary providing the necessary verbal attack on Nazism, *This Is Your Enemy* proves to be a curious anti-Nazi vehicle. The German shot footage shows how obviously glorious the Germans are – pressing forward in battle, not a single casualty – and no doubt Warner Brothers thought such footage, when viewed as propaganda, would be pretty self-condemnatory. But there is a problem. When the English-speaking commentary stops – about five minutes into the picture – in order that the audience might fully appreciate the implication that comes with German troops, aircraft and tanks bombing and blasting their way through cities, perhaps it also conjures the merest inkling of foreboding. After all, these same troops are capturing *lots* of prisoners, are leaving a trail of death and destruction, and are *laughing*. Indeed, towards the end of *This Is Your Enemy*, the sequence in which Warner Brothers have actually added their own sound effects in order to drown the original German narration is positively harrowing, particularly as this new soundtrack consists of a solitary sobbing voice (the image on-screen is that of chaos, dead children and women mourning).

*This Is Your Enemy* recently received a limited distribution on video in Britain as part of a package with *Nazi Atrocities*. Claiming to be a 'Waldheim Production', these two films were presented

together in a video box that claimed "Recent warcrimes accusations mean nothing to modern youth."

Like the bold, brash, billing of a supporting feature, *Nazi Atrocities* opens to

EXTRA  
Army Pictorial Service  
present  
Film Evidence of  
NAZI ATROCITIES

flashing onto the screen. Then, from an unnamed location in Germany, the film takes in a bird's-eye view of a concentration camp. In sharp contrast to *This Is Your Enemy*, the narration is sombre and without pomposity – for now. It describes the "destruction of human minds and bodies" and how allied troops are being greeted with tears of joy as they liberate the malnourished prisoners of the Nazis. "Russians jubilant . . . the British will not forget . . . nor the Poles . . . the French are free . . ." says the narrator of the heroes' welcome. However, with the annotation "Yanks free Yanks," the Wurlitzer organ (that plays throughout) cranks into *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and gives clear indication of the kind of patriotic showcasing soon to follow. Here comes Eisenhower. Extermination camps. Local townsfolk are jostled and herded through buildings of the dead, brought to see the gas chambers and the crematoria, scenes brimming with massive human devastation. "Take a good look, you Germans," the narrator quips. At several later junctures, he adopts the same manner to remind the viewer/the Germans/the allied troops/himself that "there are the bodies and these guys are dead."

Narrator notwithstanding, *Nazi Atrocities* is as grim a whistle-stop reminder of the Holocaust you are likely to get. The Army Pictorial Service cameraman (no further credits given) captures the grisly scenes: crematoria with their ovens clogged full of charcoal bones; the twisted corpses of those torched alive; pathetic frail conscripts whose skeletal forms still breathe; those who bear the mark of experimentation; the commandant's wife's collection of tattoo-flesh; severed heads resting on a tabletop; the exhumation of the dead for autopsies; the old dead making way for the new dead.

It is said that Hitler had some instances of torture and execution filmed for his own perusal. Cameras fitted to the observation ports of





the gas chambers to record the naked, screaming citizens within, climbing pyramids of the dead to reach the final breath of clean air. Likewise, they say, Idi Amin had his own inspired atrocities recorded. There is colour film of what the Americans found when they liberated the concentration camp at Buchenwald. But virtually no filmed record of the extermination of Europe's Jews and gypsies – the Nazis saw no purpose in recording that, and the victims had no opportunity to show what was happening to them. The few records which do exist

are either the work of amateurs – and they date back from before the systematic extermination began – or they show conditions in transit or concentration camps, not the actual extermination camps, crematoria or gas chambers.

Japanese cameramen recorded what they could of the atomic devastation that heralded the end of the war. But this film of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was confiscated by the US army and not declassified until some 25-years later. What stood as axiom for so long, was finally released in 1970 as *Hiroshima-Nagasaki: August, 1945*. Compiled from actual footage with a narration by American writer-editor, Paul Ronder, and a Japanese woman victim, the film is a stark, simple visual record of the physical and human destruction caused by the two blasts. Cities are completely wasted, children mutilated and fleshless, women with the patterns of their kimonos burned to their skin. The magnitude of suffering and devastation is almost incomprehensible. The narration – which tries to maintain a studious detachment – is rendered useless.

William Copland's *The Race*, and Ahmed Rachedi's *The Twilight of the Damned*, again, both released in 1970, comprise of authentic newsreel documentation and archive materials. Like *Hiroshima-Nagasaki*, these compilations manage to be at once embittered and compassionate, while, regardless of narrative, the sheer magnitude and endless parade of real-life atrocities serve only to pummel the viewer into a muted resignation. *The Race* is a series of newsreel clips, the focus being that of injustice towards the oppressed peoples of the world. Amos Vogel states in *Film as a Subversive Art* that *The Race* "[contains] meticulously detailed on-camera killing of a captured prisoner – possibly in the course of the Congo 'action' – who, cringing on the ground has just been promised life. Since the 'outcome' is unknown to either him or us, we share – in the comfort of a movie theatre – his unbearable dread. . ." The Algerian-made *The Twilight of the Damned* documents the imperialist colonisation of Africa. In the film's most shocking sequences – those deriving from footage shot by the French and later seized by the Algerians – the torture and execution of Algerian resistance fighters, children, and passers-by follow in quick and bloody succession.

Another film, Carlos Vilardebo's *Vivre/To Live* [1960], also utilizes newsreels and materials culled from international archives. Here they form a catalogue of atrocity, 20 years of suffering, torture

and death from all walks of life, from all over the world. Civilians, war victims, natives, peasants.

Newsreel was introduced to the public in 1906 and issued daily except when fog prevented filming. The first unscheduled event to be captured by the sound newsreel camera was the assassination attempt on Prince Humbert of Italy on 24 October 1929. The first newsreel footage of an execution was taken in 1935 by Universal Newsreel's Cuban cameraman Abelardo Domingo. Camera in hand, wandering into a prison yard one day, Domingo was confronted with the sight of bandit Jose Costiello y Puentasto facing a firing squad. He filmed the execution unobserved and shipped the footage off to New York for inclusion in the newsreel.

Although it didn't happen often, sometimes theatres would give top billing to a newsreel as opposed to the movie playing. This was the case with the 'Texas Cop Killers – Slayers of 10 Men' Bonnie & Clyde after they were ambushed at Gibsland, LA. On the posters, the title of the picture that day was lost to the bold announcement '*Actual Authentic Pictures* taken immediately after the death of these two murderous lovers.'

When the newsreel of bandit Puentasto being executed reached Cuba, cameraman Domingo was put under arrest and condemned to face the firing squad himself (monetary intervention from Universal saw to a reprieve). During the war, not only did the newsreels of Germany depict nothing but swift and marvellous advances in world domination as the front pressed ever onward, but every country had their own interpretation of how the war was going, courtesy of newsreel. While Soviet cameramen recorded troops retreating, Soviet cinema-goers got to see only resolute deviance, calmness and single-minded patriotism. The British, taking urban destruction as an important theme, showed carefully constructed pan shots of bombed-out streets, and to instil that Britain could take it, ensured that each shot begin and end on buildings still intact. The Italians revelled in scenes of their own fair country ablaze in order to inflame feeling against the cultural barbarism of their enemies. Back in Germany, propaganda minister Josef Goebbels saw that newsreels were lengthened to as much as 40 minutes, with cinema doors allegedly being secured shut so that there was no possibility anyone might inadvertently miss anything.

Stan Brakhage is hailed as one of the founding fathers of the American avant-garde. Since *Window Water Baby Moving* [1959], the unnervingly intimate record of his young wife before and during the birth of their first child, Brakhage has concentrated his films around the events of family life including, of course, those extreme moments of birth and death. His *Song XXIII; 23rd Psalm Branch* [1966/7], inspired by 'Vietnam', "is a study of war, created in the imagination in the wake of newsreel death and destruction." More recently in *Murder Psalm* [1980], a study of childhood terrors and death, Brakhage has taken a barrage of TV images, hand-treated and often blurred to the point of being rendered incomprehensible, and intercut them with brief narrative tales. In one of the tales, a young girl gazing at herself in a mirror is splashed by a ball that lands in a garden font. Stunned, the girl falls to the ground and a doctor is seen examining her in his surgery. With this, the film recalls images of casualties of war, of dissections and headless corpses on a slab. Perhaps the most notorious of Brakhage's films is *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*.

*The Act of Seeing*. . . (along with two earlier films, *eyes* and *Deux Ex*) forms part of the so-called 'Pittsburgh Documents' all made in 1971. For the first two films, Brakhage received permission to film from within the Pittsburgh police department and the West Pennsylvania Hospital, respectively. With the latter it was the Allegheny Coroner's office.

"The violence exacted against the spectator by *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*," wrote Jonathan Rosenbaum in *MFB*, "is the physical confrontation with death, an act that no other film imposes on the viewer in quite the same way or to quite the same degree." Its title being a literal translation of the word 'autopsy', this underground classic has retained an obscure cult following for over two decades and still draws audiences into the arthouse cinemas. Filmed with a hand-held camera in the poorly lit confines of the city morgue, it is a poignant documentation of death without any explanatory notes. Bodies of various races, sexes and dimensions are opened from throat to groin. The outer layers of flesh are peeled back like some body-hugging overcoat to reveal the glories that lie within. Organs encrusted with cancerous tumours; hearts coated with solidified fats; multi-coloured layers of subcutaneous tissues blossoming like carnations. Faces are peeled from skulls like rubber masks, and

craniums are split to reveal the cold brains – now void of thought or emotion – that nestle within.

For a third of its 32-minutes running time, the film ponders on the pathologists as they prepare themselves and the cadavers. The anticipation of the first cut is a painful thing and it's something of a relief when it does finally come. Once this incision has been made – the first slice of flesh pulled; the first face yanked from its skull beneath; the first sight of intestine removed and placed into a slop tray – then what follows is virtually a travelogue of shape and colour. In the foreground, the camera constantly jostles from one image to the next as if, at times, striving to contain itself from rushing out of the room. In the distance, carcasses loom large like mountains. Brakhage, in a letter to friend Robert Creeley, wrote in 1971: "I had nightmares almost every single nap for weeks; and at first I kept telling people that I intended to interweave these Morgue images with mountain ranges, moons, suns, snow, clouds, etc. – the mind leaping to escape in every conceivable symbol . . . One good look at the footage (once the lab had processed those 3000-some feet) and I knew it was impossible (for me anyway) to interrupt THIS parade of death with ANYthing whatsoever. . . "

*The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* is depressingly bleak yet totally non-exploitative. Nor is it morbid. It simply shows what to expect without passing comment. It shows the frailty of the human body and our own inevitability.<sup>7</sup>

Some point of reference for the work of Stan Brakhage has been cited in Georges Franju, whose *The Blood of the Beasts* [1949] is a document of the slaughterhouses of Paris. Remorseless and unflinching, Franju moulds the shock of witnessing a butcher pounding the head of a horse into an almost casual backdrop of shape and colour. Soon, the blood, vomit and excreta of dead and dying animals provides an hypnotic, surrealist thoroughfare from which the camera is unable to break free.

When dealing with curious integrations of fact, art and death, mention should also be made of the following documentaries:

- *Forest of Bliss* [19--], Robert Gardner's impressionistic essay on death as it's dealt with by priests in Benares practising ancient rituals at the Indian city's Great Cremation Ground.

- *Krik? Krak! Tales of a Nightmare* [19--], a similarly impressionistic

documentary from Haiti on how the country's traditional voodoo religion and its magic rituals were used to sustain the 30-year tyrannical rule of Papa Doc and his son. Interspersed throughout *Krik? Krak!* is reconstructed newsreel footage, that is, the old-looking b&w sequences depicting a hand being hacked off and a head decapitated and paraded through a village are fake.

- *Death Magazine, or How to Become a Flowerpot* [1979]. Imagery of dead people compiled by director Rosa Von Praunheim. Scheduled to be aired on German TV and then cancelled, Praunheim explained in an interview with Jack Stevenson, "It was a studio technician, really, who was viewing the film and suddenly just stopped it, saying he was too disgusted to continue . . . others started to agree . . . they said people would kill themselves in front of their TVs if they showed it." A book of the film exists called *Is There Sex After Death?*

- *The Animals Film* [1982], an almost fascistic condemnation of meat-eating in the form of endless, gut-wrenching footage of factory farming and animal experimentation. Electronic music accompanies scenes of chicks having beaks cut off to prevent them from pecking one another in their confinement, to lush shots of pigs roaming fields, 'free'. One scientist claims, "We're trying to breed animals without legs and chickens without feathers." Julie Christie narrates.

- *Heaven* [1987], Diane Keaton's fusion of old movie clips, minimalism and questions of mortality directed at an assortment of people gathered in – what appears to be – an art gallery. "It's a perverse little film that thinks it has nothing to do with *Faces of Death* or *Shocking Asia* when they are in fact close relations," writes Greg Goodsell in *Subhuman*.

- *Body Works* [1988] is comprised of interviews with those who are faced with death in their every day lives. Post Mortem Technicians, Forensic Pathologists, Embalmers, Hearse Drivers and Nurses, all give anecdotes on the likes of 'my first time'. "I was over 40. I just had never seen a dead person," explains the Female Funeral Director. A post mortem monologue intercuts the film at various junctures, to a background of slowly wilting flowers. Hands, for some reason, play an important role with each interview concluding on a close-up shot of the subject's hands and an eerie organ sound. The elderly Crematorium Operator shifts nervously through his dialogue, gesticulating how "the fat content . . . helps to cremate the body. It

. . . just . . . rolls off the body as liquid and just . . . comes up in flame and helps to cremate.”

- *LA Requim* [1993], directed by George Haggerty, features the artist ManWoman expounding on his mission to rehabilitate the swastika. In his persona of Mr Death, he travels through Los Angeles with a cheery “Catch you later!” to those he meets. (“Oh no, you won’t!” comes one man’s equally cheery reply. “Oh, yes I will!” retorts Mr Death in his dapper top hat and cane.) Short monologues are provided by the likes of Timothy Leary.

Hailing from Pittsburgh, USA, Horror-Femmes offer a vast and varied assortment of comicbooks, illustrated short stories, and VHS videos in which, says proprietor James Ahearn, “vamps, villainesses and horror honeys of all kinds who love to cause trouble, invariably bite the dust in inventive, ironic and, of course, *graphic* ways.” Although the manner of demise is undoubtedly inventive and ironic, the graphic ways of Horror-Femmes lean heavily towards the “neck-tie party” – hanging and strangling. Wicked spy girls, evil Nazi bitches, Southern Belles and Air Hostesses – they all get it on the gallows.

With titles like *The Highest Gallows in the Land* and *The Slowest Hanging in History*, the xerox comicbooks and short stories provide the bulk of the Horror-Femmes’ output, with Ahearn himself putting his hand to many of the illustrations. However, there are some photo sets: *Tender Morsel*, six glossies of – what is essentially – a mechanical model roasting on a spit; and *The Ghost Manor Mystery*, an eight page booklet of photos and text, a blow-by-blow description of one young woman’s tribulations on the noose. Of the videos, while some are All-Trailer tapes, bloody and softcore snippets culled from exploitation pictures, others are more specific, as the Horror-Femmes catalogue would impress:

*The Evil Young Girl & The Necronomicon*. A violent hanging tribute to a magnificent Celtic Vixen who is justifiably proud of her Witch-Girl heritage starts the festivities, followed by a mixed bag of trailers, transfered slides, and other surprises emphasizing Hanging and Strangling.

*The Suburban Swinger and Her Slender Friends*. Lissom blondes languishing on the noose, and thunder-thighed cutie-pies are only part of this dynamic slide show-transfer.

*The Hanging of Daniela & John.* The title piece of this hour-long video blast was inspired by a great Midwest collector who bugged out on a brilliantly conceived idea. It's a classic: condemned lovers quarrel from the courtroom to the gallows with every conceivable sight gag c/o a sadistic executioner, magistrate and reverend. Strangling and hanging-orientated trailers follow.

The utilization of slide transfers in the above videos, grants not only a much safer and cheaper manufacture of death imagery be ensured (all of the Horror-Femmes output is simulation), but also better facilitates close-up examination of the numerous death-throe contortions ('terrific tongue-fest' is the expression).

Isolated instances will reveal that a certain mutated form of hardcore pornography exists whose come-on is that the players involved are far from enjoying themselves; that somewhere along the line, these people have forfeited all control and now the circumstance threatens to overtake them. This isn't a *Haven of Horror* or *Forced Entry* type affair, which might well be morally reprehensible, but remain feature films nonetheless with actors and actresses following a script. These are short films – or, loops – which strive to give the allusion that the (invariably female) performer is in genuine pain and distress. They are usually untitled, without credits and – not unlike *Guinea Pig 2* – follow a standardized snuff film formula: one room; often static camera work; invariably poor quality. In one particular film a woman is abducted and tied to a frame in a basement. The antagonist then strips her, hoists her legs into a position that offers maximum exposure of her vagina and proceeds to hammer a wooden shaft into the orifice with the palm of his hand. The woman writhes against her bonds and a looped scream repeats on the soundtrack. When the stake is removed, blood, albeit fake-looking, is evident. Heated pins are goaded through her nipples and the surface-flesh of her breasts. Her skin is pinched with pliers and alligator-clips. She is whipped and finally 'raped'. The film fades to black. Excluding the 'blood', all of this is achieved without the aid of special effects. Another film, and a woman naked from the waist down, tied with rope securing her knees at chest height, has live mice dropped onto her body. Her two tormentors force her to fellate them both before inserting a perspex tube into her vagina and allowing the mice to crawl within (encouraged with the nudge of a rod previously driven into her anus).



Another film has a bound and sometimes-hooded woman secured to a chair, tormented by a man who does nothing more than encircle her and walk out of shot.

Porn movie *Born to Raise Hell*, with its pre-credit disclaimer, 'All scenes performed by professional actors. . . The Management of this theater is not responsible for any psychological effects it may have on you as a viewer', involves similar experiences meted out on homosexual men. Leather-clad guys are beaten and lashed. Studded dildos are forced into anal cavities and rotated on drills. Steel hose-grips are slipped over cock and balls, and tightened with the aid of a screwdriver until the recipient urinates in pain/fear/excitement.

As puzzling or revolting as these films may be, they incorporate paid performers; celluloid prostitutes doing their thing for the right amount of financial incentive. Any physical harm being inflicted has been anticipated by the performers in the same way a pair of boxers will tolerate the consequences of a twelve round hell-for-leather bout.

However, performers sometimes claim otherwise once they have reaped financial rewards from their work. Several years after the success of *Deep Throat*, Linda Lovelace, seeking kudos with her new social associates, contended that she was made to perform in the film at gunpoint by her then husband-manager J.R. 'Chuck' Traynor. Lovelace, also infamous for getting intimate with a dog in *Collie Sex*, told Gloria Steinem in one interview, "I thank God today that they

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weren't making snuff movies back then." The male star of that movie, Harry Reems, denied such claims and recently explained to *The Independent* newspaper, "Chuck was an asshole, but he was hardly around for filming. Damiano [the director] sent him away because he would get jealous of how much she was enjoying the sex. She was really into it."

It was Richard Kern, speaking of his film *The Evil Cameraman*, who said, "I wanted to make something 'real', you know? The Jap girl at the beginning of the film was scared. I didn't tell her what was going to happen. It was an exercise in power, I guess."

Out of the New York punk scene, circa late-70s, there emerged a small group of people who would turn their hand, and friends, to the Super-8 camera. Anti-Hollywood, anti-establishment anti-you, films such as Beth and Scott B.'s *Black Box*, Eric Mitchell's *Underground USA*, and Nick Zodiak's *They Eat Scum*, were screened predominantly in downtown clubs, with many of those watching being right up there on the screen. Fuelled by a general lack of acceptance, it was Nick Zedd (aka Zodiac aka Orion Jeriko aka Ernie Birk) who took it upon himself to take the standard and set up *The Underground Film Bulletin*, releasing the first issue in 1984. With the masthead 'Continuity to us is when the film runs through the projector', Zedd put a name to the New York 'new cinema' and came up with a movement – the Cinema of Transgression.

From a background in photography and fanzine publishing, Richard Kern was among those – whether he liked it or not – to be labelled a transgressive. Although he made a couple of features in the early-80s it wasn't until 1984 and the story of "the sexual misadventures of a sexually insane girl," *The Right Side of My Brain*, that the Kern penchant for sex, drugs and violence landed him with the tag of misogynist. Perhaps more in keeping with the production company moniker – Deathtrip Films – than misogyny, a certain critical outrage was guaranteed to swell audiences wherever Kern played. With the exception of Nick Zedd's brilliantly oppressive *Police State* [1987], Kern has singularly provided the Cinema of Transgression with its most outrageous and controversial works. In *Submit To Me Now* [1987], a seemingly random collection of sexual activity permeates, beginning with sequences of male and female masturbation, and ending with disturbing acts of self-mutilation. In

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*Pierce* [1990], a girl's semi-delirious pleasure at the hands of a body-piercer soon turn to cries of pain, yelling to Kern "Richard! They're hurting me!" *The Evil Cameraman* [1986-90] pretty much picks up where *Submit To Me Now* left off, opening to the extremely skinny Jap Ann being tied to a ladder and her head covered in a black hood. This done, she is then beaten.

One commentator of Kern called his work, "viciously degrading fare – grainy, grotesque montages of sex and hideous violence

ranging from casual S&M to fake snuff scenes," while a screening of *The Evil Cameraman* at The Ritz – a prestigious club in New York City – was halted after 30 seconds and Kern thrown out when the owner deemed it 'kiddy porn'.

Kern and Zedd, along with other transgressive filmmakers like John Spencer, Tommy Turner, and Manuel DeLanda, have some of their work incorporated in *The Cinema of Transgression Vol. 1*. Also included in that compilation tape is *A Suicide*, a short film by Richard Klemann. In it, an anonymous guy is seen leading several wires from the power mains in his apartment to a chair. Taking his shirt off, he then tapes the wire to his flesh and with his feet emersed in a bucket of water, prepares himself in the chair. At the far end of the room a camera is rigged, ready to capture the moment he throws the switch. A series of still photographs conclude the piece.

Suicides make up Graeme Wood's *Teenage Babylon*. . . [1989], a lyrical, disturbing and haunting look at the deaths of several love-lorn youngsters. This Australian film looks to have been dragged from the bottom drawer of a police department somewhere, where it has laid discarded for 20-odd years. Its Super-8 graininess pops, starts and jumps constantly. The black and white imagery, when not over-exposed, is subject to indiscriminate editing: often a hand or a shot of the floor, or a shot of nothing, will skip by. And the soundtrack whirs noisily, like a record stuck in the play-out groove. Indeed, *Teenage Babylon*. . . is every bit the clinical, hurried, crime-scene document. A clapperboard reads '23/6/61 Mornington'. The next shot is of a car parked facing the sea, both doors wide open. Several edits skate round the vehicle. A boy is seen in the driver's seat, a shotgun between his knees, his head thrown back and bloodied. Blast traces pepper the interior of the car. Further edits and the boy is shown laid out on a blanket, viewed from his back and then his front. His head is held up for the camera. A detective stands motionless and expressionless, displaying the shotgun. A second detective, standing on a grassy hummock, marks the location of a revolver bullet casing. The body of a girl lies nearby, clutching blades of grass, a last reflex action. Again, the body is laid out for the lens, front and back. Her skirt blows gently in a breeze. More celluloid interjections bring a second clapperboard: '7/10/63 Windsor'. Indoors now, static shots reveal a bathroom with scissors, blood and hair in the sink. A girl lies



'7/10/63 Windsor'. *Teenage Babylon*. . .

in the bath, her wrists cut with a razor blade. The bloodied water is pure black on the monochrome film. The girl is topless with what looks like the word 'John' carved into her stomach. The final instalment is '25/2/65 Pt Melb' and again, is set at a beach head. Two lovers in their beachwear lie embraced on a blanket, thermos to one side; pills to another. Again, detectives hold the bodies for display. Fingers of a sand-covered hand, grasping at sea shells, are unfurled. A fly crawls over the face of the boy. The girl stares beyond the camera lens, her eyes clouded and unseeing.

*Teenage Babylon*. . . is comprised of reconstructions with actors. However, so convincing is the form, and so convincing are the players that one could easily be forgiven for thinking that the whole thing was 'real'. Indeed, the closing shots of the girl staring beyond the lens, must stand as one of the most effective assimilations of death put to film. Only the final player credits curb the idea that a real cadaver was involved. Wood has based his film on actual scene-of-the-crime photographs and genuine tragic teenage suicides, possibly

as filed by Det. Sgt. Richardson, credited at the end of the picture. The imagery is rendered all the more devastating by the accompaniment of such sentimental ballads as *When I Fall in Love* and *The Masquerade is Over*, performed by Linda Bull.

A classified ad in *Film Threat Video Guide* [#5] ran "WE WANT YOUR SUICIDE ON VIDEO TAPE. Submit a video tape depicting how you would commit suicide not exceeding 10 minutes. All entries will become the property of ATV."

On 5 August 1992, a private TV channel in Germany came under criticism for screening the suicide of Wilhelm Schmitz. Unable to cope with his wife having walked out on him – despite the fact that he had since remarried – Schmitz, a 50-year-old electrician, decided to kill himself. On 30 March 1992, Schmitz prepared his elaborate suicide note. He rigged a video camera in the corner of his bathroom, focused it onto the bathtub and set the machine recording. Ingesting a lethal cocktail of barbiturates, he then stripped naked and slipped into the warm water. The tape was an hour long, time enough to capture Schmitz's 20-minute demise.



'25/2/65 Pt Melb'. *Teenage Babylon*. . .

The German station SAT.1 calls *Akut*, a 'news magazine with guts'. A Wednesday evening in August – over four months after it happened – *Akut* screens to its viewers tragic highlights from Wilhelm Schmitz' suicide. The TV screen breaks to the attenuated colour of a home-produced video image. In it, a bespectacled grey-haired man lowers himself into a bathtub. At the bottom right of the picture the camera's automatic clock reads PM 1:45. From the tub, the man looks straight towards the lens and tells the viewer that this death is his own decision. A TV station edit: the time is now PM 2:09. Drifting out of consciousness the man's head has lolled to one side, his body slipping deeper into the water. He has also begun to vomit but network interference has reduced that area of the TV screen to a blur of flesh tint and yellow staining (sparing the 1.6 million viewers the sight of retching). PM 2:10. Now fully unconscious, the head reaches water level. Inhaling the water, the body reacts with violent convulsions. Over and over again, it jerks itself up from below the surface. Finally it succumbs and sinks down. Still. Last minutes of life courtesy of television.



Wilhelm Schmitz.





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## **7. Death in the Media**

Probably the most prominent death footage of all time is that depicting the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Re-run countless times in documentaries and even feature films, the sequence is one of the most graphic and detailed murders on record.

Twenty-second of November 1963. As the open blue Lincoln rolls down Elm Street on Dallas's Dealey Plaza, the 18-seconds of film randomly shot by Abraham Zapruder shows the President first reacting to a throat wound. Jackie Kennedy leans across to examine her husband as Governor Connally in the front seat responds to bullet impacts. A split second later, Kennedy's head bursts, peppering the occupants of the vehicle with fragmented tissue and bone. As he topples forward, a four-inch flap of scalp folds over his face exposing the devastated brain within. His wife scrambles over the trunk of the vehicle to retrieve a large section of detached skull.

The film was sold to *Life* magazine for a reputed \$250,000. Although several stills of the murder were reproduced in the

publication, it wasn't until March of 1975 that the footage was aired in full on television. Over a decade had passed from the occurrence of the event to its international broadcasting.

Equally horrifying footage was shot 12-years after the Zapruder film was aired. The time span between the occurrence of this event and its broadcast, however, was considerably shorter than that of Kennedy's murder. Approximately 30 minutes.

On 22 January 1987, R. Budd Dwyer, the Pennsylvanian State Treasurer, gave a press conference following his conviction for bribery the previous month. During his trial at the Federal District Court, officials from a Californian computer company testified that Dwyer had illegally received \$300,000 to secure a lucrative contract for the company. Dwyer, 47, faced a possible 55-years in prison and was to be sentenced the following day.

Reporters believed they had been summoned to the conference to witness a resignation, but the portly man had other, more devastating intentions. Dwyer's protestations of innocence lasted almost half-an-hour, during which he claimed to be the victim of an "American Gulag." He rounded off his monologue by handing out sealed envelopes to three of his former colleagues.<sup>1</sup> This done, he reached for a manilla envelope lying beneath documents on a desk and from this removed a .357 Magnum. There was a pause of silence



R. Budd Dwyer about to die.

before friends and reporters realised exactly what was about to occur. Camera shutters fired rapidly as Dwyer backed to the wall warding off potential interference. "Please leave the room if this will affect you," he nonchalantly warned. The panic-stricken journalists called out, "Don't Budd . . . don't do it." Dwyer looked nervously from left to right and told any over-enthusiastic saviours, "This is loa . . . may hurt someone." And hurt somebody it did.

*Gripping the barrel with his left hand, right hand on the butt and trigger, he thrust the weapon into his mouth. Before anyone could intervene, his forefinger increased the pressure on the trigger and the hammer struck the primer cap of the chambered shell. The nitrocellulose propellant ignited in the cartridge case driving the bullet along the barrel. Super-heated discharge gasses erupted from the muzzle and vaporized the soft tissues forming the roof of Dwyer's mouth. The copper-jacketed bullet punched through the palate bone forcing a destructive path through the nasal fossa. Now deformed in shape, it travelled through Dwyer's cranial cavity at an angle of approximately 85°, propelling fragments of bone into the cerebellum, yielding excessive brain tissue destruction. The bullet struck the inner wall of his skullcap, and exited his head leaving a surprisingly neat circular hole about four-centimetres in diameter.*

So rapid was the event that several cameras, whose shutter-



The Treasurer lies dead.

release buttons were pressed as Dwyer pulled the trigger, caught only the falling form. With his body slumped behind the desk, television camera operators and newspaper photographers moved in. The final image of the man showed his glazed eyes slowly closing to slits, head sinking to his shoulders, and virtually his entire blood supply haemorrhaging from his nostrils. Rather optimistically, someone over the moans of the stunned onlookers could be heard to request a doctor.

Dwyer was officially pronounced dead at 11.31 am. By lunchtime his suicide was broadcast into household USA. Television station WPVI-TV in Philadelphia showed the suicide in full, as did WPXI-TV in Pittsburgh. Officials validated their decision to screen the shocking footage by calling it an 'historic event'. It was run again in a later broadcast but in an edited form. Several stations showed only the gun being taken from the envelope, and others cut away as Dwyer inserted the weapon into his mouth. CBS and ABC networks abstained from transmitting the videotape footage altogether and opted for a still photograph of Dwyer instead.

Later that same day, a series of photographs showing the event in sequence – the gun in Dwyer's hand, then in his mouth and finally his head thrown back from the blast – was placed on an international transmission network preceded by a warning as to their disturbing quality. Less than 24 hours after his death, newspapers around the world gave everyone everywhere the opportunity to study Dwyer's last seconds of life. As with the television networks, the press employed their own standards of discretion in illustrating the story. All but the tabloids refrained from using the explicit photographs. SEE INSIDE! ran front page banners; MAN SHOOTS HIMSELF ON TV insisted *The Daily Mirror*. Inside was a double page stage-by-stage picture spread, with the final photo – the bullet shattering through Dwyer's head – being afforded maximum page space.

From studying broadcasting and film at Boston University, and following a succession of jobs with various TV stations, Chris Chubbuck arrived at WXLTV, in Sarasota, in 1973. Here she successfully took over the regular morning talk-slot, *Suncoast Digest*. Some months later a new format for the show was agreed upon, one which required Chris to read the news before interviewing local personalities.

On 15 July 1974, the day of the format launch, Chris arrived at work as usual, seemingly none too perturbed about her new duties. Indeed, everything appeared to be running fine. Script before her, Chris was ready at the news desk as the *Suncoast Digest* theme played. With the control room countdown, she was on air with a smile, introducing herself and the morning programme to the viewers. She proceeded to read the news. During a report about a shootout at a bar, there developed a technical hitch. The proposed outside broadcast film – which would have provided a brief respite for the newsreader – juddered onto the screens and off again as quickly. Nothing too serious, more an occupational hazard for those sitting in front of the camera. The screen in blackness, the control room switched from the outside broadcast back to the studio.

Said Chubbuck: "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts and in living colour, you are going to see another first – attempted suicide."

Following the mechanical fault and half-expecting some kind of spontaneous apology to the viewers, the crew wasn't surprised by a diversion from the script. Before they knew it, the 30-year-old had drawn a revolver, fired off one shot at her head and slumped forward, pumping blood onto the desk. The screen cut to black.

Chubbuck died 14 hours later at Sarasota Memorial Hospital.

Michael Simmons, news director at WXLt, told police that Chubbuck had joked about buying a gun only a week prior to the incident, telling a colleague, "Wouldn't it be neat if I were to take the gun, pull it out on air, live and in living colour, and blow myself away." Her family stated that she'd been depressed and talked of suicide. Following the incident, viewers of the show flooded Sheriff Capt. Ellis Denham's office with telephone calls. He reported to the press, "... why she did what she did or the way she did it, nobody knows."

Denham and his men took possession of a videotape of the show for investigation.

During the Nicaraguan civil war, in 1979, American news correspondent Bill Stewart ventured into the country with a film crew. The team approached a roadblock manned by armed soldiers. The van they were travelling in parked several metres away, while Stewart continued towards the checkpoint on foot to negotiate with the

guards. A colleague filmed the encounter: Stewart holds out his identification and press credentials and is instructed by one soldier to kneel, then lie spreadeagle in the road. The reporter obeys and is abruptly kicked in the side as he lies face down. His pleas are ignored and the guard places a rifle to Stewart's head and shoots him dead. The camera jerks up to the roof of the van and the film ceases. The shocked crew made their escape as the soldiers opened fire on them. The retreating vehicle was struck, resulting in the death of the journalist's interpreter.

Stewart's murder was broadcast on international television the day after it occurred. In the UK it was shown in an edited form on the early evening news with the promise of the full event being shown in a later edition. The footage eventually became part of the mondo film *Days of Fury*, the stunned voices of Stewart's colleagues reacting to his murder being replaced with dramatic music and Vincent Price's narration.

Kazou Nagano, head of the Toyota Shoji gold company, stood accused of financial malpractice and defrauding his clients. On 18 June 1985, at his Tokyo home, television crews assembled outside to interview and record his reaction to the charges. Nagano refused to appear before the cameras. Undeterred by the presence of the television crews, two former clients suddenly appeared and began to kick at the door. Nagano's attempts to hold the door closed proved futile. The two assailants forced their way into the house and, following an unseen fracas, emerged brandishing a bloodstained bayonet. Nagano lay in the hallway stabbed and hacked to death.

On 20 June 1991, a group of council staff, journalists and police gathered outside Albert Dryden's ramshackle bungalow in Butsfield, County Durham. A TV crew from a regional BBC news unit was also there. It was typical local news fodder: the end of a three-year legal battle the 51-year-old Dryden had fought with the council over property. The former steelworker claimed that the bungalow he had built with £13,000 of his redundancy money did not require planning permission; the local council insisted it did. The issue had been the subject of a public inquiry and court proceedings; Dryden had lost both. With the TV crew in tow, the Derwentside District Council's principal planning officer, Harry Collinson, attempted to serve a

demolition order and persuade Dryden to move out to allow bulldozers in. Dryden was not moving; he refused to take the writ and threatened Collinson with a pistol pulled from a holster strapped to his leg. The man fired, striking the official point-blank in the chest. Dryden then calmly reloaded, climbed his fence, and fired a second fatal shot at Collinson. The TV camera kept rolling as the press, council officials and police officers fled for cover. Dryden opened fire at random, wounding a reporter and police constable.

The shooting made nationwide television. Following a two-hour siege Dryden was arrested and, in April of 1992, convicted of murder, the attempted murder of a council solicitor and two charges of wounding. The *Daily Express* reported the verdict as 'Jailed for life! Cold blooded TV killer Dryden'.



# THE TV graveside horror as a tragic dad shoots ex-wife EXECUTIONER

THIS was a moment in time that will be remembered for years to come. It was the moment when a man shot his ex-wife in front of a television camera.

Wife, who was on the TV screen, was shot in the head. The man, who was on the TV screen, was shot in the head. The man, who was on the TV screen, was shot in the head.



In January of 1993, *It Happened Like This*, a US Spanish language programme, followed a grieving 34-year-old Emilio Nunez as he placed flowers on the grave of his daughter. She had committed suicide the previous November and Nunez told the TV reporter that he held his ex-wife, Maritza Martin, responsible for the death. In the Queen of Heaven cemetery in North Lauderdale, Florida, with Nunez still on camera, Maritza unexpectedly arrived to pay her respects. The two-man film team rushed over to the woman, extending a microphone as she made her way to the graveside. Nunez pushed past, drew a 9mm automatic pistol and proceeded to pump bullets into the back of Maritza's head. She fell to the ground. Circling the 33-year-old woman, he continued firing until the pistol was empty. Nunez exclaimed, "I should have done it a long time ago," and ran away. Then the cameraman stopped filming. (Nunez was captured by police a few hours later.)

The footage was aired by several stations in the US and by the news network, NBC. Protestations were made by hundreds of callers because of the screening. The on-camera killing made the daily papers in Britain, with some likening it to the suicide of R. Budd Dwyer. The front page of the *Daily Sport* was taken up by a 25x19cm blurred frame blowup of Nunez blasting the fallen woman, with the header 'THE EXECUTIONER'.

Eleventh of May 1985 saw the live broadcast of a league football match between Bradford City and Lincoln City. The venue was Bradford City's home ground. Mid-way through the first half, television cameras picked out a column of smoke rising from the covered stand. Within minutes, flames could be distinguished and concerned spectators made for the exits. Strong winds fed the fire and soon the wooden structure was engulfed. Many fans discovered the exits to be locked and others sought refuge on the pitch. So intense was the heat that rescuers spontaneously combusted as they approached those on fire, struggling over the advertising placards. Spectators could be distinguished in the flames as they slowly cremated. Others, engulfed in flame, staggered before the cameras. Over 40 people were burned alive, the whole event being broadcast live to Saturday afternoon television viewers. The worst scenes were never aired again and likewise never appeared in any subsequent documentary, indicating strict control over the footage.

Several days later, on 29 May 1985, death was again aired live courtesy of football. The match between Liverpool and Juventus at the Heysel stadium in Brussels was delayed when rival fans clashed. TV cameras focused on the running battle between hooligans, some fans clearly seen firing pistols. The panic generated among the supporters resulted in a crush of people fleeing to escape the violence. Forty-one people perished when a dividing wall collapsed. Cameras focused on the dead, clothes stained with vomit and urine; the dying struggling to draw air under the weight of tumbling people.

In 1982 during the filming of John Landis' *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, one sequence – set in a combat zone of the Vietnam war – required that veteran actor Vic Morrow help two refugee children across an expanse of water under simulated gunfire. As he carried the youngsters, one under each arm, pyrotechnic experts detonated several peripheral explosions and flares. One blast however sent debris into the tail rotor of an overhead helicopter and the machine fell out-of-control, crash-landing in the lake. Its undercarriage collapsed and the helicopter pitched over towards the actors. Morrow, heading for one of the cameras, was struck in the chest by the tip of the main rotor. The impact severed the upper half of his torso, hurling the separated head and shoulders several metres into the air. Both children were hit by the blade and they too died instantly.

All exposed film was immediately seized. Landis was subsequently tried for manslaughter, and charges of violating child labour laws and of neglect were filed against Warner Brothers. Steven Spielberg, the film's producer, was among those individuals faced with a \$200 million damage suit from the parents of Renee Shin-Yi Chen, one of the children killed. Extreme longshots of the accident were eventually shown on the BBC TV review programme, *Film 82*.<sup>2</sup>

Brandon Lee, actor son of kung fu legend Bruce Lee, was fatally wounded on 31 March 1993 while working on the movie, *The Crow*. He died 12 hours later. Initial reports stated that 27-year-old Lee was the victim of a stunt effect where explosive squibs – simulating gunshot impact wounds – had ripped into his stomach. It was later alleged that the .44 prop Magnum used to shoot Lee in the scene, instead of containing blanks, had instead been loaded with a live bullet. Police removed footage of the scene for investigation. The

*National Enquirer* [20 April 1993] stated that some weeks before Brandon was killed, "another actor on *The Crow* discovered a prop gun loaded with a live bullet." The *Enquirer* added, "Brandon believed that males in his family had been cursed because his grandfather angered some Chinese merchants." Police have ruled the killing an accident.

Tip Tipping, 34-year-old veteran stuntman on several Bond films, the Indiana Jones romps and the likes of *Robin Hood – Prince of Thieves*, plunged to his death on 6 February 1993, while engaged in a parachute stunt for BBC television. Working on the series *999* - which dramatically reconstructs real-life narrow escapes - Tipping was to recreate the fall of skydiver Terry Wakenshaw, who escaped death after his main parachute caught on the plane he was leaping from. Tipping, having practiced the stunt twice already, readied himself for the final fall. The TV cameras commenced to roll. At 10,000 feet he made the jump. Unlike Wakenshaw, however, Tipping's parachute didn't open at all. Nor did the two in reserve. The stuntman plummeted to his death, impacting with the ground at approximately 120 miles an hour.

Other stuntmen to have met their match in front of a camera include:

- Jim Shepherd, who was killed during the making of *Comes a Horseman* while being dragged behind a horse, in 1977.
- Bullet Bailey, after being towed behind an aircraft, was killed when the cable snapped as the plane soared at 500ft. 1981.
- Jack Tyree was killed doing a jump for *The Sword and the Sorcerer* in 1981, when he missed the airbag.
- Jack Tanberg, working on the CBS-TV movie, *The Five of Me*, was hit and killed in 1981 when a car went out of control on the set.
- Reid Rondell, the resident stuntman for the TV series *Airwolf*, died after a helicopter crashed and exploded while standing in for actor Jan-Michael Vincent. 1985.
- Dar Robinson died impaled on a tree following a high-speed chase in 1986, when his motorcycle careered over an embankment.
- Jay Currin, a human fireball specialist, died when he jumped off a cliff and missed the airbag, 1990.

For a million dollars, Australian shark hunter Ben Cropp was contracted to fight a shark to the death in a 60-foot underwater arena

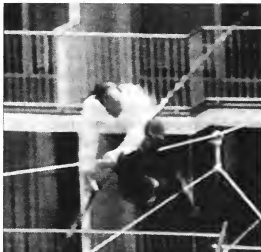
off Samoa. Said a promotor, "If the guy gets eaten, the film rights will be very valuable." Financial problems saw that the duel never took place.

Another proposed fight to the death was that of a "karate champion" and a "wild Bengal tiger," arranged for the delectation of American closed-circuit viewers. A certain Mr. Co had gone as far as to persuade the Haitian government to let him stage the event, before pressure groups intervened and the encounter was cancelled.

So popular is the work of the stuntman that several TV shows have done away with plot and storyline altogether. Shows like *Stuntmasters* place the stuntman in increasingly volatile situations. Carl Boenisch was killed in 1984 when he parachuted off a cliff for *Live! The World's Greatest Stunts*. These are showsports, sporting events in which the risk of a fatality is high. They pit one man against death – to win is to live; to lose is to die. In his book *Blood & Guts: Violence in Sports*, Don Atyeo makes the observation that the popularity of the legendary Evel Knievel is not down to his competence as a stuntman, but because he invariably fails and has an accident. In 1974, Knievel attempted to jump the Snake River Canyon on his rocket-cycle and, instead, plummeted to the bottom; his proposed leap over 13 London buses left him trapped with a damaged spine after crashing on the landing ramp; his flight across a shark-infested tank at the Chicago Amphitheatre met with similar disastrous results.

The Chicago Amphitheatre leap was to provide the climax to the television show *Evel Knievel's Death Defiers*, a CBS Special aired early 1977. Prior to this, the live broadcast had featured Orvil Kissaberg blasting himself with four sticks of dynamite, Jumpin' Joe Gerlach leaping 84 feet onto a sponge, David Merrifield suspended from a helicopter via his teeth, and the aging Karl Wallenda – with eyesight failing – walking a highwire across the Chicago Ampitheatre (he would meet his doom falling from a highwire a year later). Knievel had filled a tank full of sharks (*Jaws* proving a box office smash at the time), but had crashed his bike in a practice run prior to the broadcast. In spite of the accident, the show was not robbed of its big finale. Promised the presenters: "We've captured it all on videotape."

*Death Defiers* scored near-record ratings. Kevin O'Malley, director of CBS's sports programmes, acknowledged that the



Karl Wallenda falling to his death.

"definition of sports has gotten very fuzzy." Following the show, he admitted to having refused to schedule a man willing to swim *through* a shark-infested tank as opposed to jump over it, or another who wanted to hang himself. With the public appetite for such displays growing, O'Malley pondered upon television going so far as to screen premeditated death: "I can't sit here and say nobody would ever put an execution on television. I know I wouldn't and I'm pretty sure nobody on this network ever would. But then again I've seen the standards change so much."

There was some talk of local stations carrying the execution of Gary Gilmore.

Since 1959, Highway Safety Films Inc. have been making and presenting driver education shorts to the American public. Gaudy-looking with a washed-out red hue, these films often featured grisly accident scenes in an attempt to shock the audience into driving more carefully – to keep within the speed limits, not to drink-and-drive, always wear a safety belt, and so forth. Often the emphasis was on the young with commentary informing that a road accident can take away good looks . . . or a girlfriend. With *Options To Live*, in 1979, the Highway Safety group compiled the bloodier moments into one

quickfire film, "simply to make YOU a better driver." Karl Mackey, seated in front of a moviola, introduces several batches of clips. A pseudo-jazz score plays as he relates the details surrounding several auto collisions. "We make the films that show it and tell it like it is." Mangled figures are dragged from impacted vehicles. A state trooper weeps at the sight of a lifeless infant. "A five-month-old baby . . . a 16-year-old girl – they're all dead," Mackey dryly comments. Another batch of film clips depicts those who weren't killed outright and lingered for several hours in critical condition before passing on. The flute and saxophone continue to accompany the dreadful imagery. Following this, Mackey announces, "We showed you pain, but we didn't think *seeing* was enough. So, we let you hear the sound of pain." A woman's screaming voice can be heard amongst a cacophony of cries and wailing. "Those screams impress you?" asks the narrator. "Will they make you more alert in driving?"

Many such safety films were produced, approximately 10 to 20 minutes duration. A 1965 film from Canada, *Safety or Slaughter*, in its attempt to shock and hold the attention of the viewer with a zombie-like narrator, made for particularly bizarre viewing.

Shock tactics, as a means to stimulate change, was recently put forward in a plan to reform Los Angeles gang members by making them watch autopsies. Of the idea, however, one police detective is quoted as saying, "These kids are hard enough. We don't need to make them harder."

Alongside George Holliday's 81 seconds of amateur film showing black motorist Rodney King being battered by Los Angeles cops, 3 March 1991, there was another incident – also committed to tape – that went some way in igniting the L.A. riots mid-1992. In an in-store video recording, Soon Ja Du, a Korean shop owner in L.A. can be seen arguing and grappling with 15-year-old black girl Latasha Harlins. As the youth turns to leave, Ja Du aims a gun and shoots her in the back of the head. Both films have been shown on TV. Another murder to be captured on security camera was that of a hold-up in the small midwest town of Augusta, Michigan, in August of 1975. The incident was the cover story for the May 1978 edition of *Master Detective* (which also carried a frame enlargement of the 'moment before murder'). The magazine reported how Stephen Michael Gay was found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to life

imprisonment after levelling a rifle at cashier Connie Adams, and shooting her dead at point-blank range.

On 23 January 1991, Constable Darrel Edward Lunsford, a 47-year-old US police officer, apprehended three men on a stretch of road near Garrison, Texas and requested to search their vehicle. The search was being filmed from a dash-mounted camera in Lunsford's vehicle and sound recorded via a remote microphone worn by the police officer. Following a few questions conducted around the open boot of the suspects' car, two of them set upon Lunsford and dragged him to the ground. The third man left the vehicle and joined in the assault. Lunsford was beaten, kicked and stabbed to death. A colleague of Lunsford arrived 30-minutes later and discovered the video still recording. The tape was duplicated and played at the local police station. Two brothers were arrested and charged with the officer's murder the following day. The Texas Department of Public



Lunsford, moments from murder.

Safety's spokesman, David Wells, said this was the first case of a violent crime being recorded by the in-vehicle cameras.

The sequence was aired on American television's *I Witness Video* programme shortly after it occurred. Lunsford's wife appeared on *The Geraldo Rivera Show* and the footage was shown again. In this instance the widow's face was inset so viewers could watch her distraught reaction as the thugs murdered her husband.

"Reality-based TV" is the name given to a recent development: television programmes of a documentary nature that screen actual events and explosive moments, not for information purposes but for entertainment. It is the logical evolutionary step from the mondo film. One of the first and most controversial of the Reality TV shows is *I Witness Video*. Indeed, its popularity has spawned a German edition in which the host encourages "Everyone's going to be a journalist because everyone's got a camcorder," before showing such scoops as a woman being attacked by whales (whose husband films on, regardless that his wife is being dragged to the depths). "Watch this next clip if you want to go skiing this year," he chides as footage rolls of a skier breaking most every bone in his body and almost falling to his doom (slow motion replays enhance each instance the body strikes rock). Even R. Budd Dwyer lifting the gun to his mouth is a component of the opening titles and theme tune. Network sensitivity – or attention-grasping having been accomplished – *I Witness Video* on both sides of the Atlantic has had a somewhat more catholic choice of clips since their first series' run.<sup>3</sup>

Other shows, such as *Eye Spy* and *A Current Affair* may be more investigative in content than *I Witness Video*, but similarly they encourage viewers to send in their films – handing out camcorders to the public in some instances. Teams from popular shows like *Cops* (the advertising for which runs, 'Sometimes they pay the ultimate price') and *Code 3*, stopped riding shotgun with police patrols and paramedics when they realised that on some nights *nothing* happened, and if it did they weren't necessarily there to film it. Instead, they too called upon viewers to send in their amateur videos. *American Detective* is pretty much *Columbo* or *Ironside* without the plot: it features the work of real private investigator John Bunnell and opens to the statement, "Everything you see is filmed as it actually happens. There are no recreations." Supporters of such tabloid television claim these shows are "inspiring" and "help viewers to improve the world



around them" (Christopher Geist, Interim Chairman of Popular Culture Dept., Ohio's Bowling Green State University). Others take a dimmer view: "All of a sudden we're deputizing millions of people to become police officers, people who have no training, or telling them to become reporters . . . yeah, put some dangerous felon on your sofa and play Deputy Dawg and maybe you'll get on *I Witness Video*. Or better yet, you'll get on *A Current Affair* a dead person who filmed his own shooting. But, you know, no one's concerned with that because it's good *entertainment*" (Jonathan Turley, Law Professor at George Washington University).

Many networks advocate such home-grown footage for their news programmes – programmes like CNN's *Newshound*. With a roving eye and a bit of luck, anyone with a camcorder is eligible for TV time. Independent video journalism is popular enough to have generated at least one support organisation, complete with its own video guide, *How To Shoot TV News*. "Wreckage and planes make great video," the guide recommends, "but you must remember the people involved in the stories." One newshound – speaking in the television documentary *Videos, Vigilantes & Voyeurism* – claimed that networks are always interested in anything with fire and flames; flames coming out of buildings, people hanging from burning buildings, and such like. On top of the financial rewards, being a newshound was "fun . . . and I get to go behind police lines." Peter Finch's drunken discussion as to the future of television in *Network* has proved astonishingly prophetic.

When it comes to violence being depicted in the news, the BBC *Producers Guidelines* handbook suggests "Dead bodies should not be shown unless there are the most compelling reasons for doing so ... There are very few circumstances in which it is justified to show executions or other scenes in which people are killed or dying." Obviously, such advice must stand as purely arbitrary. If at all. And the recommendation assuredly doesn't extend globally. One comment made by a member of the US Channel 2 news team (as a kind of justification for flying in for a camera close-up of a drowning man) seems laughably fickle and arrogant in these Reality TV times: "It's not very often that you see the last few seconds of somebody's life on TV."

Twenty-eighth of February 1993 saw the beginning of a siege in

Waco, Texas. A fanatical cult of Branch Davidians lead by crazed David Koresh, the self-named Lamb of God, was the subject of an investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The department had become aware of the excessive purchase of arms by cult members. When agents approached the buildings occupied by the sect, they were fired upon with automatic weapons. Armed BATF officers laid siege to the centre resulting in the deaths of four agents and six cult members. The road leading to the building was occupied by several broadcast units beaming the assault live to US televisions. Koresh himself was contacted by telephone by one television unit as the siege continued. Koresh claimed he was wounded and many members, including a baby, were already dead from gunfire. When asked if the dead child was his, Koresh moaned and the conversation ceased.

BATF was subsequently replaced by the FBI, who cut power and water supplies to the holdings after Koresh's promised deadline to vacate the premises expired without event. He had agreed to leave, along with all his followers, if a taped message of religious content would be broadcast. The FBI conceded to the transmission but Koresh renege on the deal.

The world media lost interest in events as a state of stalemate dragged on for over 50 days. Live coverage resumed when the FBI decided to conduct a final assault on the buildings. Using military engineering equipment and tanks fitted with battering rams, they punched several holes into the walls. A non-lethal irritant gas was pumped into the compound, and an FBI spokesman informed television crews that the gassing would continue until the cult members left the premises. As he spoke the compound erupted into flames. Koresh, it was alleged, had instigated mass suicide, murdering those reluctant to take their own lives. Eighty-six people perished in the inferno. Nine people survived, fleeing after they allegedly heard one member screaming "the fire is lit, the fire is lit."

Prior to the assault the FBI had set up surveillance equipment around the compound. Helicopters hovered overhead using infra-red video cameras to determine the location of the people inside the buildings. Using the information obtained, they established where to concentrate the gas infusion. Agents were also utilising ultra-sensitive listening devices powerful enough to register medium-level conversations through walls.<sup>4</sup> It seems inevitable that a recording of

the tragedy will exist. The potentially appalling contents can only be imagined at this time. Whether it will ever be made public will depend upon the outcome of any investigation to determine where to lay the blame for the 86 deaths.

The similarities between this and the Jonestown massacre of November 1978 are evident.<sup>5</sup> Both leaders desired their final death-rituals not to pass unrecorded. Jim Jones utilised primitive audio tape equipment and Koresh the advanced technology of direct satellite broadcast. Live coverage of instant death. Snuff TV.

Some weeks before the Waco disaster, in February of 1993, a terrorist bomb exploded in the basement parking lot beneath the World Trade Center building. The media were on the scene as rapidly as the emergency services were, filming the wounded being helped from the smoking tower. As black-faced survivors, shocked and exhausted exited onto the street, they became instant celebrities on live TV. Others, trapped many floors above, were contacted by telephone and asked to describe their life-threatening experience live on air.

A previous case where TV news reporters not only perverted the course of the news but made the news themselves, was the US peace invasion of Somalia on 9 December 1992. On hearing that US troops were to be deployed, marauding gangs had already left the Somalia township of Mogadishu, hiding their armoured cars and weapons until they thought it safe to commence looting and fighting again. The following night, with night vision equipment, the first crack team of Navy 'Seals' slithered silently onto the sand, their faces blackened against the moonlight. "Welcome to Somalia!" was the cry that greeted them as TV reporters and cameramen converged on the beach head. Arc lamps lit up the area for the cameras, and reporters thrust their microphones at the bewildered Marines. Drivers of amphibious landing craft were forced to yell for TV crews to get out of the way.

The pictures were beamed across the US. A Pentagon aide called the networks in an attempt to get the crews in Somalia to switch off the lights. But TV bosses argued that it was the government who had encouraged them to go to the scene in the first place, anxious that the world should see the mercy mission. Commander Joe Gradisher said, "Thank God there was no opposition."

In August of 1989, Americans saw footage on ABC news of a US government official in Paris delivering an attaché case to a Soviet

agent. Though he remained as yet to be charged of any offence, the network named the official. A full ten seconds elapsed before ABC made it known to viewers that this wasn't in fact him, but an actor, and the footage only their interpretation of a possible scenario. In the *Sunday Telegraph* [8 October 1989], an editorial headed 'TV Fakes the News' saw a roundup of other surreptitious reporting on the box. It mentioned how a prominent CBS figure had been accused of transmitting faked film of the Afghanistan conflict. How an ex-SAS trooper and combat cameraman had accused British television of doing likewise: transmitting faked Afghanistan footage, shot by guerillas themselves. How London Weekend Television had carried an interview with a LWT employee posing as a member of the public. The piece declared: "A genuine news event is, almost by definition, unexpected. TV is ruled by the tyranny of getting good pictures."

Which may be true. However, the piece concluded with a call for the British public to be as "robustly skeptical about the 'news' they see on television as they have been about the 'news' they read in certain newspapers." Such a remark has a ring of tyranny all of its own. Indeed, in 1993, the *Sunday Telegraph* was not the only newspaper to condemn the airing of a documentary called *Murder in Mind*, concentrating on the techniques used by the FBI to track down serial killers. The main cause for complaint (by the press, not the public – only 11 complaints were received from viewers) was the inclusion of a brief interview with Dennis Nilsen. The *Telegraph* condemned the exposure the killer was given with a three-quarter page article and a cartoon of Nilsen standing by a black plastic bag (of a type he had used to dispose of his victims). The article likened those who viewed the programme to the kind of person who watched such films as *Reservoir Dogs* and *Fatal Attraction*. Furthermore, it implied that the programme could inspire others to kill: "... a lonely man in a bedsit will be sitting drunk enjoying that video one more time before going out into the night looking for company." Drawing upon such logic, it goes without saying that some lonely man may be sitting at home reading the *Sunday Telegraph*, looking again at a cartoon depiction of Nilsen and ...

In the next chapter, we shall have a look at the origins of snuff. And how the media can, and has, manipulated death into becoming something it is not.



*everyone was terrified*

## 8. Propagating a Myth

*'The Manson Family is rumoured to have filmed their activities.  
This is what those films may have looked like.'*

Filmed in Regular-8 with no synchronised sound and no script, so opens *Family Movies* (aka *Manson Family Movies*), a 1984 film by John Aes-Nihil. Pretty much a collection of set-pieces with friends of the director playing both Family members and their victims, *Family Movies* is an estranged retracing of events during that fatal Summer of 69. Family members are depicted lounging around the Spahn ranch. Charles Manson is seen encouraging girls to take off their clothes. Sharon Tate and associates are murdered at the Polanski residence; blood is daubed on the walls. Hand-painted signs appropriate the relevant information ("Sharon is transmuted with fear."), while a post-production musical accompaniment alternates between the Beach Boys, Pink Floyd, the Beatles' 'White Album', and Manson dialogue culled from interviews. Director Aes-Nihil said

of *Family Movies*, "I know it has little continuity but it is supposed to be The Film The Family made of themselves. And they weren't filmmakers either."

"No, we don't get to see the snuff footage everyone's heard whispers about. . . ." reported *CrimeBeat* magazine [March 1993] of Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick's documentary, *Manson*.

"There were unsubstantiated rumours, current at the time, that such 'Satanic' groupings as the Manson Family were performing blood sacrifices of animals and making 'snuff' movies," stated *Fortean Times* [April/May 1993].

These 'whispers' date back to Ed Sanders' book, *The Family*. Here, Sanders' states that Family members stole an NBC-TV wagon loaded with film equipment sometime during the Summer of 1969. The truck was subsequently dumped and most of the film given away, but Manson took one of the NBC cameras with him to Death Valley in September. The Family were also in possession of three Super-8 cameras. It is alleged they shot porn-movies and, determines Sanders, "the Barker Ranch chop-stab dance, where they [the Family] danced in a circle, then pretended to go into slash-frenzies – attacking trees, rocks and one another with knives." He adds, "God knows what else they shot with their stolen NBC camera."

In the chapter 'Getting the Fear', it is claimed that the Family would sometimes rent four or five battery-powered 8mm projectors and show films at night; several movies at once. The films are said to have included the knife dance, porn, animal sacrifices and human sacrifices. Speaking with an anonymous one-time member of the Family, Sanders learns of a "short movie depicting a female victim dead on a beach."

ANON: I, I, I knew, I know, I only know about one snuff movie.

I, uh, you know –

SANDERS: Which snuff movie do you know about?

ANON: I just know like a young chick maybe about 27, short hair . . . yeah . . . and chopped her head off, that was

. . .

(After deliberating on where the film could have been shot, and noting the hooded outfits worn by the protagonists, the interview continues.)

SANDERS: What did the girl look like? What was the scenario?

ANON: What was what?

SANDERS: What was the scenario? Was she tied up? Did she look willing?

ANON: She was dead. She was just lying there.

SANDERS: She was already dead?

ANON: Yeah. Legs spread, uh. She was nude but nobody was fucking her. They said her head was just chopped off and she was just laying there.

(The interviewee ponders on whether or not the five-minute film could have been a part of a much larger film, something that the hooded group hadn't edited into one of their other movies.)

SANDERS: What was the rest of the movie like?

ANON: I didn't see it. I just, you know –

When the Spahn ranch was raided on 10 October 1969, and Manson apprehended, police seized the last of the stolen NBC film equipment: a camera loaded with unexposed film. Bill Vance, a Family member, supposedly made off with some of the Death Valley footage.<sup>1</sup> Other



*Family Movies.*



unsubstantiated information put forward in *The Family* includes a note written to a reporter by a person named Chuck, claiming possession of films of 'Malibu and San Francisco axe murders'. And a Los Angeles dope dealer who allegedly sold "a film depicting the ritual murder of a woman to a famous New York artist whose name will not be mentioned here."

Such rumours continue to be confided by the media.

In September of 1990, building worker Ian Gabb, 38-years-old, visited his homosexual associate Leonard Walkley. Fifty-eight-year-old Walkley was the chairman of the 'Dr. Who Appreciation Society'. This visit however was no social call. On entering Walkley's flat in Brixton, Gabb attacked him and bound his paramour in a chair using lengths of steel chain. He secured his victim with a padlock, connected a length of flex to a mains socket, and proceeded to torture Walkley with jolts of electricity.

Gabb was later arrested on a charge of attempted murder. He explained to police that he tortured Walkley so that he might retrieve vital information he believed the man to possess – the source of an underground distribution network of pornographic snuff movies. The case was linked to the murder of 14-year-old Jason Swift and five-year-old Barry Lewis who were the victims of a paedophile gang in the 80s. During time in prison for rape Gabb had acted as police informer, gleaning information from his planted cell mates who were members of the group.

It was suspected, but never proved, that the children were filmed being sexually abused and murdered. Detectives attended Gabb's trial hoping to acquire information to aid their probe into possible international distribution of snuff movies. The front page headlines of the *Daily Star*, dated 27 July 1990, was '10 KIDS DIE ON VIDEOS'. While, on 25 October 1992, the *News of the World* was surmising, "One theory advanced is that the deaths of Barry (Lewis), Jason (Swift) and Mark Tildesley were filmed for 'snuff' videos. The repulsive films – showing real child murders – are prized by paedophiles who are willing to pay thousands of pounds for each video."

The suggestion of snuff movies in this case derived from a speculative column in the *Mail on Sunday* in July 1990. There was no evidence of any kind found at the crime scenes to point to filming.

Nor was any implication of snuff made by any of the perpetrators. The deaths of the children were also believed to have been afterthoughts rather than intended goals following abduction. The newspaper article merely fuelled rumour and added an unforgivable burden on the parents of the murdered children. To discover the horrors that their children had already been subjected to was bad enough. To have unfounded rumours that their children's rapes and murders were being rented and sold as video entertainment was gutter journalism at its most callous.

Similar was a case several years prior, involving the small midwest town of Jordan, Minnesota. On Thursday, 25 October 1984, the *London Standard* reported that the FBI was searching for the bodies of six children thought to have been murdered after participating in pornographic filmmaking. Of the report, a claim made by Dr. Roy Eskapa in his study, *Bizarre Sex*, ascertained that "Children aged between four and 13 had been murdered in what may be termed 'kiddy snuff films'."

In September of 1983, Christine E. Brown told the authorities that James John Rud, twice convicted of molesting children, had abused her 9-year-old daughter. Rud had met several unmarried women at local Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Following his arrest on 1 October, he confessed to having volunteered to babysit for all the women, then molested their children at will. That same month, following interviews, a 10-year-old boy confided how he had not only been molested by Rud but other people as well, many of whom filmed or photographed him engaged in various sexual acts; all of whom 'looked like Elvis'. Over the course of eight months, 25 of Jordan's 2,700 residents were charged with sexually molesting dozens of children, including their own. After months of uncertainty, the first case came to trial and ended in an acquittal on 19 September 1984. On 15 October that same year, charges against all remaining defendants were dropped after six of the children related incidents of slayings.

In a copyright article in the 16 October edition of *The Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, an unidentified source is quoted as saying, "We're looking for dead bodies of kids . . . We may have gotten into this too deep but we're looking for bodies." R. Kathleen Morris, the prosecutor who had led the investigation, declined to

comment on the article. Instead, she issued a statement saying she had dismissed all the sex abuse charges to prevent the district court from having to disclose 126 pages of sealed police notes. "Sensitive documents," she said, that could "compromise an active criminal investigation of great magnitude."

Dan Anderson, an agent of the FBI in Minneapolis, whose office was responsible for investigating pornography involving interstate commerce, told *The New York Times* that he was not aware of any investigation. Indeed, no investigation into a child pornography ring was undertaken until 17 October, when the FBI joined the state in beginning an inquiry. Jack Erskine, superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, told the newspaper he would assign as many agents as necessary to the case.

Defence attorneys accused Kathleen Morris of conducting "a witch-hunt." Some Jordan townsfolk viewed her prosecutions as an attempt to begin a political career. On 18 October, Kathleen Morris resigned from the case saying that her controversial role detracted from justice.

Rumours were quick to circulate that the "sensitive documents" contained accounts of children having been murdered and buried in Jordan by child pornographers, including some of those previously faced with molestation charges. In interviews, children told how other children were buried in the woods and at the back of a former defendant's home. A therapist, who interviewed one youngster, was quoted as saying that several people at a party took a boy "and hung him over a tub until he bled out enough to be wrapped in a canvas tarp. Then he was put into a truck and never seen again." Other children were forced to eat a pet gerbil named Snowball and a stray tomcat.

Soon enough, however, the Scott County Sheriff's Department would make public the fact they had received no reports of missing children in the last few years. Also, the local high school had no records of missing children. An unidentified police official was quoted in *The Minneapolis Star and Tribune* as saying, "I don't think the sheriff ever believed that the kids were telling the truth." The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the FBI would go on to drag the Minnesota River for bodies, but none were found. By mid-November, 1984, three boys would admit to having lied to authorities about slain children, and the murder investigation was

dropped.

The mutilation and murder of infants would seem to be a prominent factor of ritual child abuse. Some of these alleged murders have been recorded on video tape. In his book, *Children for the Devil*, Tim Tate refers to an instance of ritual abuse that came to trial in 1985: The Miami County Walk Babysitting Service case. No one was killed but statements made by the children corresponded that the sacrificing of animals and acts of degradation and abuse had been filmed. When Ileana Fuster pleaded guilty halfway through the trial, she affirmed that many details presented by the children to be correct, agreeing that her husband Frank had indeed made videotapes.

Tate – who asserted in his earlier work, *Child Pornography: an investigation*, that snuff films existed in the 1940s – determined of the elusive videotapes, “In case after subsequent case, children would be disbelieved about allegations of ritual abuse because they refused to retract claims that the ceremonies had been videotaped when none were found. Had US law enforcement taken the trouble to study the manuscripts of Ileana Fuster’s evidence they would have found a possible explanation for the missing tapes – quite simply that a fellow cult-member removed them.”

It appears that stories about Satanic abuse first emerged in America in the mid-1980s. An episode of the popular American investigative series *20/20*, devoted to *The Devil Worshipers*, was aired on 16 May 1985.<sup>2</sup> Following this, the existence of the ‘Satanic snuff movie’ was proposed in Maury Terry’s book *The Ultimate Evil*, an investigation into the crimes of David Berkowitz. Although Terry hinted at the manufacture of snuff films as a by-product of the international conspiracy he had uncovered, he failed to come up with any substantial evidence. Indeed, he eventually retracted the proposal and claimed the notion derived from confusion with Francis Ford Coppola’s feature, *The Cotton Club*. However, the book became an international bestseller and the seed of Satanic machinations was sown in the minds of sensationalist journalists, fundamental Christians, and public alike.

In an edition of the BBC TV’s *Panorama*, entitled *In the Name of Satan?*, an investigation was made into Satanic child abuse. Or rather, the “Satanic Panic.” It postulated that there is a multi-million dollar industry in the United States producing books and videos

warning of the dangers of Satanic abuse and proffering advice. Of claims made that there are 50,000 human sacrifices a year in the US, one detective, a Sex Abuse Specialist working for the FBI, says, "It's not as easy as these people think to get rid of a human body. No matter how much the average person cleans it up, there are gonna be traces left behind. In these cases it's not only a matter of no bodies, but no evidence of these murders taking place." The programme also read out extracts from Lauren Stratford's best-selling book, *Satan's Underground*. In it, the author alleges to have been sexually abused, forced to engage in bestiality and appeared in child pornography by the time she was eight years old. When she left home, she became involved with Satanists and bore three children. Two of them were killed in snuff films, while the third, Joey, was murdered in a Satanic ritual. However, no one can corroborate that she was ever pregnant. In a face-to-face, the *Panorama* presenter questions Lauren Stratford:

*It's been impossible to find anybody who can verify that you were pregnant on any of the three occasions that you describe.*

LS: Yes, I'll agree with that. I mean, I don't know. I just have to take whatever . . .

*So, were you telling the truth about that incident?*

LS: Yes, I was.

*Yet, you're not able to substantiate the fact that you were pregnant three times.*

LS: The first two times, I can't really tell you a lot about yet ...

*Do you understand the problem that people would have with this?*

LS: Oh, of course! If I were in your shoes right now, I would say 'Gosh. That sure sounds silly to me. I don't think I believe it'.

*I put it to you that you're not telling the truth.*

LS: Well, I don't know what to say to you.

*You could admit you weren't.*

LS: That wouldn't be the truth.

*But as yet, there's no evidence.*

LS: There isn't any evidence for a lot of these cases.

*But your sister has said that she lived with you throughout that period, and doesn't recall anything like what you've described.*

LS: That may be true and that may not be true.

Speculative Satanism reared its head again in the UK courtesy of Christian Fundamentalist, Andrew Boyd. His book, *Blasphemous Rumours*, chronicled an apparent spread of the Satanic disease

throughout suburban Britain. Using 'victims' cloaked behind pseudonyms, Boyd was able to push the snuff myth to greater heights of insanity.

She ['Janet'] says snuff videos would be screened in front of the children while they played at the farm in Cumbria . . . she believes the snuff videos were recordings of actual killings: "People being tied round trees and being whipped, a bit cut off here and a bit cut off there. You know it's true, because it's impossible to make it twitch, an arm, as though it hadn't been done. I've seen them go in with ordinary hacksaws and just chop an arm off."

The videos had a home-made look to them: "You could tell, because on the telly you see it as clear as day, but on these you've got the lines and a shudder and a bit of movement that you wouldn't get off a professional."

Boyd continued, "She described one occult shop in the north of England where snuff movies were available. . . " and, "The tapes sell for between two and three thousand pounds."

What was most alarming though was the broadcasting of a documentary presented by Boyd on 19 February 1992, the day before publication of his book. Aired as part of Channel 4's *Dispatches*, a series devoted to investigative journalism, *Beyond Belief* also used a 'survivor', her identity hidden by silhouette and the false name 'Jennifer'. Said Boyd, "Jennifer claims that she was made to take part in the sacrifice of children, including one of her own." Following a lengthy account describing the killing of her child, Boyd claims her statement to be actual evidence of Satanic abuse. The programme then played its trump card and screened a discovered video depicting an actual Satanic ritual. The tape itself proved to be Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth's promotional video *First Transmission*. Scenes shown on television involved the initiation ceremony. Jennifer claimed she was part of the group who made the video, insisting she recognised the room in which the ritual was occurring. When asked to describe what was happening at one point – illustrated by a freeze-frame – she said a foetus was being aborted.

Boyd claimed his book was the culmination of two-years research, yet it took *The Mail on Sunday* less than two weeks to discover the true identity of 'Jennifer'. Her real name is Louise

Errington and she told reporters that in 1990 she had spent some months in a Christian healing and deliverance centre. "They told me I was possessed by demons . . . They prayed over me in tongues and taught me to face my own guilt." It transpired that the notion of child sacrifice arose from a vision seen by one of the centre's lay preachers.

Repercussions from the *Dispatches* programme led to the invasion of Genesis P. Orridge's home by Scotland Yard detectives. The police took away rare art archive material accumulated over a period of 20-years. At the time of the raid the Orridges were out of the country, and have since relocated to America fearing authoritarian persecution should they return to Britain.<sup>3</sup>

In *Film Threat Video Guide* [#7], in response to a reader's query printed the previous issue, the following letter appeared:

. . . For the other reader who asked if snuff films are real. Gunther Ruethbach(er) (I'm not sure of the spelling) – a CIA spooks in prison on trumped-up charges – has reported that the producers of kiddie porn routinely kill their captives on video when they are too old to pass for children and that the government seeks out these producers through various means and kills them with extreme prejudice in order to keep the public ignorant of just how wide-spread this industry is. Needless to say, if these videos do exist, they are illegal to own and probably have very bad production values. Signed, Smarty.

On 2 June 1985, San Francisco police officers arrested a man named Leonard T. Lake for possession of a handgun fitted with a silencer. The weapon was discovered in his car after the police had been called to the scene of a theft. Earlier, Lake had approached a shopkeeper to plead on behalf of his Asian accomplice, Charles Chitat Ng, who had been caught attempting to steal a \$75 vice. Lake was taken into custody to make a statement. Ng, meanwhile, had disappeared.

During questioning Lake gave the officers several aliases and the name on his driver's licence proved to be that of a missing person. While in a holding room at the police station Lake requested a glass of water. Unobserved, he took a pill from the buckle of his belt and slipped it into his mouth. He gave his true identification seconds before he slumped unconscious in his chair. Attempts to revive him

proved ineffective and paramedics were called. Lake remained comatose and died in hospital after being sustained on a life-support machine for four days. During his autopsy, remnants of the capsule were found in his digestive tract. Several identical pills were discovered in his car, each containing cyanide.

Police inquiries led them to Lake's ex-wife, Caralyn Balazs. Helping with their investigations, she directed officers to a secluded cabin, owned by her parents, in Wisleyville, California. It later transpired that Balazs had removed a dozen videotapes from the premises the day before. However, when viewed, these tapes contained no material of a criminal nature. During the search of the cabin and surrounding outbuildings detectives discovered a handwritten book entitled, 'The Diary of Leonard Lake – 1984'. Also found were two further videotapes. Examination of the surrounding land revealed 45 pounds of human bones.

When officers played one of the cassettes, it showed a young white woman – who was later identified as Kathy Allen – handcuffed in a chair. It was evident she was situated within one of the rooms in the cabin where the tape was discovered. A voice, off-screen, informed the captive woman: "You're going to cooperate and in approximately 30 days – if you want a date, you can write in your calender the fifteenth of May – we will either drug you, blindfold you, or in some way or other make sure you don't know where you are and where you're going, and take you to the city and let you go . . . My name you don't know. His name is Charlie . . . While you're here you'll wash for us, you'll clean for us, you'll fuck for us. That's your choice in a nutshell. It's not much of a choice unless you have a death wish. . . ." Moments later Leonard Lake enters the frame and manacles the woman's legs. Her hands are uncuffed and she is ordered to undress. Reluctantly, she does so. When she is naked, an Asian man steps into shot. It is Charles Ng. He takes the woman and forces her to shower with him. The sequence ends. Cut to a second sequence with a different woman – Brenda O'Connor – in a similar situation. The same instructions are spoken off-screen. O'Connor begs her captors to return her baby. She is informed the child is dead. Ng approaches and cuts away her clothing with a bayonet. Kathy Allen's and Brenda O'Connor's remains, along with those of approximately 19 other people, were discovered in the grounds surrounding the cabin.



Ng, still at large, was placed on the FBI's most wanted list. He was eventually arrested in Canada on a wounding charge following a confrontation with a security guard after attempting to steal property. The FBI requested his extradition to stand trial for multiple murder. The Canadian authorities at first refused but eventually surrendered Ng following continued pressure for his extradition.

When investigators were able to question him about the murders at the cabin, he stated that Lake was solely responsible for the crimes. He claimed he had only taken part in the degradation and sexual abuse as evidenced by the video recordings. Had any of these tapes shown the act of murder, this line of defence would be futile. First police reports of the video contents suggested sexual assault, humiliation and torture. When the press became aware that videotapes and murders were involved in the case, though not *directly* linked, the snuff suggestion was too tempting a hypothesis to ignore. Further credence was given with the subsequent Wisleyville rumours that Ng had been shipping such tapes back to his native Hong Kong.

In *Zodiac*, the bestselling book about the elusive serial killer who terrified San Francisco and the Bay Area, author Robert Graysmith writes that on 9 August 1978 he received an anonymous telephone call. "I can tell you who the Zodiac is," the voice on the line said. "He's so full of movies he has a record of his activities on film." The tip-off sent Graysmith – a member of staff at the *San Francisco Chronicle* – chasing the "best suspect in the case," a classic films buff. In several of his letters to the police and the press, Zodiac had made references to movies (*The Exorcist*, *Badlands*, *The Most Dangerous Game*. . .), now it seemed probable that the killer's sign-off symbol – the circle with a cross through it – which was thought to be a rifle sight, could well be the projectionist symbol found on leader beginning a film. Upon further investigation, Graysmith was told of possibly incriminating evidence to be found in a film canister labelled 'Do Not Open – Nitrate Film – Danger'.

Primed to explode if opened, the canister was alleged to contain sets of car keys, bloodied shreds of clothing, and film of one of the murders. The suspect is said to have passed the canister to a friend in California for safe-keeping. By the time Graysmith has located this friend (who acts very suspiciously), it's been returned back to the suspect. By the time Graysmith locates the suspect, he no longer

believes him to be the Zodiac, and the mysterious, roving, booby-trapped can of film – subject of ‘witness reports’ and so much speculation – is not mentioned again.

In August 1992, *True Detective* magazine ran a feature which claimed to reveal the possible identity of another elusive serial slayer: that of Washington’s Green River Killer. In a piece entitled ‘After 10 Years – Is The Mystery Solved? Was The Snuff Movie Maker The Green River Killer?’ author Barry Benedict links a 45-year-old “narcotics manufacturer and ‘snuff’ pornographer” by the name of Richard Allen Sanders with the murders. Benedict states that in the summer months of 1988, an un-named prostitute and drug addict told detectives she had information about the man killing all those prostitutes. She said that her supplier, Richard Sanders, had played for her a video – not one of his usual sex films, but a snuff film. The tape, she said, showed two children being killed on camera. “What do you think?” Sanders is supposed to have had asked, boasting he had made the films himself. “There is lots of money in this stuff.”

The woman added that Sanders had other snuff tapes in his collection, and that she recognised some of the victims as street girls who worked the El Cajon Boulevard.

In January of 1989, police put Sanders under surveillance. He was arrested soon after for ramming his Corvette into the car tailing him. A slip in his wallet led police to a storage locker in El Cajon. From it they removed X-rated tapes and photographs, drug paraphernalia, weapons and sex toys. In the meantime, Sanders had raised the \$14,000 bail and was gone, only to be shot dead on 10 March 1989, by an acquaintance to whom he owed money.

No snuff films had been found among those items removed from the locker in El Cajon. Of the “snuff pornographer” himself, Barry Benedict concludes in his piece for *True Detective*: “Sanders had plenty of time after bailing out of jail to dispose of the incriminating material, assuming it ever existed.”

Working on *Trail of Blood*, a film adaptation of the Green River Killer, American-based Russian filmmaker, Ari Roussimoff, stated recently: “The snuff movie angle is something I have never ever heard before in regards to the Green River Killer, and I am certainly very familiar with the case.”

Serial killer Henry Lee Lucas claimed on several occasions that

he was a member of a Satanic cult called 'The Hands of Death', supposedly involved in human sacrifices on a secret ranch in Mexico. Allegedly, Lucas was introduced to this group sometime between 1978 and May 1981, by his partner Ottis Toole. Lucas, who had a penchant for confessing to most anything (even to the delivery of



*CASH AND ARI: Filmmaker Ari Rousimoff is sure to make a killing with his new film, Trail of Blood. Snuff said.*

*Screw comments on Trail of Blood.*

poison to the People's Temple in Guyana) and then retracting his statements, told police that some of his crimes had been committed under the command of the cult. In September of 1984, during an audio cassette recording for a radio programme, Lucas told evangelist Bob Larsen that he had killed 360 people. However, he phoned Larson prior to the broadcast of the tape and retracted what had previously been said. Lucas was convinced that the Hands of Death, which no one in law enforcement had been able to prove existed, was going to kill him for his confessions. In a recent interview for *Fatal Visions* magazine, Ottis Toole said of the Hands of Death: "The rituals are secret for members only but I can tell you we did throat cutting, blood drinking and hearts were taken from the bodies of virgins . . . We'd eat them. The livers too. The blood was drank from a big cup."

Though officially never awarded any credibility, the story of secret cults, Satanism, and claims of human sacrifice have led some reporters to suggest that Lucas, Toole and the Hands of Death were also involved with snuff film making.

In Britain, in the early months of 1992, a man was taken to court and subsequently fined for 'importing a snuff video'. Southwark Crown Court heard how the confiscated tape depicted a young Asian female tied to a bed being dismembered by an "actor" dressed in a Samurai warrior's outfit. "It falls into the category of a snuff video," said the prosecution. Then added, "This is not an Asian girl alive being murdered, but something that is so well simulated that that is the impression it creates." The film was *Guinea Pig 2: Flower of Flesh and Blood*.

Imported from New York, Customs officers seized the video at a postal depot, then carried out a controlled delivery at the defendant's home. After 26-year-old Christopher Berthoud accepted the package, he was arrested. The subsequent search of his home revealed several videos and audio tapes featuring interviews and documentaries about mass murderers. This, coupled with the variety of stuffed birds and animals, and small quantities of Speed and LSD in his possession, weighed heavily against Berthoud.

The court heard how the confiscated video also included the mondo documentary *The Killing of America* and two short medical films, *Infant Brain Surgery* and *The Faces of Dissection*. Berthoud,

it was explained, had admitted to the offence because he wanted to spare any jury the anxiety of having to watch the shocking footage. Despite forensic experts in both Britain and the US having established the killing to be a clever simulation,<sup>4</sup> the court – themselves admitting to *Guinea Pig 2* being nothing more than a “thoroughly revolting piece of film” – warned that “this is a very serious matter which would normally attract a sentence of imprisonment,” and fined the defendant £600.

Although its possession seems to warrant immediate confiscation on whichever side of the Atlantic you live, the repercussions of *Guinea Pig 2* and ‘death craze man’s snuff movie shame’ – as reported in the tabloids – were felt most strongly in the UK in May of 1992. Nationwide TV and press coverage was given over to news that trading standards officers had smashed a torture videos network, a video nasties ring, or snuff film racket, depending upon the source.

“In the largest operation of its kind,” reported *The Guardian* [8 May 1992], “the council investigators, supported by police, seized almost 3,000 videos depicting scenes including torture, mutilation and cannibalism . . . It is claimed that some videos depict real-life footage from autopsies and medical surgery.” However, quite innocuous titles like *Wild at Heart* and ‘Kate Bush’ seemed to be the norm in the stacks of video cases shown on TV news reports. The titles most cited in the press included, *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Bloodsucking Freaks*, *Driller Killer*, *Human Experiments*, *A Lizard in a Woman’s Skin* and *Blood Bath*. The ‘nature’ of these films was evidenced on TV news, with a brief excerpt of Joe D’Amato’s *Anthropophagous the Beast*.

A total of nine raids were carried out in Liverpool, Leicester, Cardiff, Redruth in Cornwall, Solihull, Kettering and Rochester in Kent. The operation was the culmination of six months of undercover work by investigators who had infiltrated a mail order network via the classified ads of a popular horror film publication. It was said that the videos were exchanging hands for anything up to £90 between those as young as 12.

*The Independent* noted that some movies confiscated claimed to show ‘actual murders’. The *Manchester Evening News* went one better in stating that the ring “earned millions of pounds by duplicating and marketing under-the-counter ‘snuff’ movies.” This overblown hysteria and defective journalism was put into some kind of perspective by Peter Mawdsley, Liverpool’s Chief Trading

Standards Officer. He doubted that the haul contained any actual snuff films saying, "Some are billed as snuff videos but I believe it is more a matter of marketing because most of the people in them are easily identifiable."

The *Daily Telegraph* reported the same story, claiming "Among nearly 3,000 videos seized in a series of raids in England and Wales were so called 'snuff' movies, in which murders are supposedly carried out on camera." Seemingly unaware of exactly what snuff is, they went on to state, "If evidence emerged that the 'snuff' movies portrayed real murders they would be handed to the police." Needless to say the reporter couldn't grasp the logic that if they *didn't* contain real murders (which they didn't) then they couldn't be classed as snuff movies to begin with. The report turned on its heels with an admission that "all of those seized so far have been fakes." Not wishing to lose all credibility the item concluded, "police in Britain believe snuff movies do exist." It took a mere three-column-inches to transform existent articles into idealistic supposition.

The *Daily Star* managed to link news of the raid with that of murdered schoolboy Jason Swift several years prior, under the sensitive header 'SNUFFED OUT'.<sup>5</sup>

In a separate instance, *The Independent* reported on 6 April 1993, that trading standards officers had "seized copies of a 'snuff' video at a children's fair in Birmingham. An exceptional piece of emotive copy, the 'children's fair' was in all actuality a weekend comic mart at a city centre hotel, and the snuff film none other than *Cannibal Holocaust*. The 1979 feature film was hardly 'the first known seizure in the city of a snuff film', as a spokesman for Birmingham's environmental services department would have it. However, the spokesman was confident enough to stress that he 'had no doubt that the death scene was genuine'.

If *The Independent* really believed such a claim, would they be so impartial to the seizure of the first snuff video *anywhere, ever* – at a 'children's fair' in Birmingham, no less – to a mere two-column-inches on page three? Or was the newspaper fully aware of such preposterous accusation? Only a few months previously, following the nationwide video raids of May 1992, they had concluded of *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Driller Killer*, *Human Experiments*, et al, "A genuine snuff movie has yet to be found."

So indiscriminate is the use of the term that Victor Davis, writing for *The Mail on Sunday* [23 May 1993], admitted to actually viewing a snuff movie. Writing a review on the latest box-office hit, Davis states that Michael Douglas' new film *Falling Down* "is without doubt the most odious I have seen since someone showed me a South American snuff film." No doubt made where life is cheap.

Such media insinuations are not new. Indeed, it could be argued that the media gave snuff its first break. Way back in the mid-1970s, the *New York Times* carried copy pertaining to the possibility that a snuff film of South American origin had been confiscated. Of course, by March of 1976, when the *NYT* ascertained that the source of this story looked to be Allan Shackleton, and the film in question his very own latest release, it was too late. The death trip was rolling.

Notes Irene Diamond in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*:

With the appearance in this country in late 1975 of *Snuff*, a pornographic film which purported to show the actual sexual assault, murder, and dismemberment of a woman, feminist activities began to be directed against the portrayal of sexual violence.

Reverberations caused by that initial scam of Shackleton's are still being felt today. The idea of snuff films is largely based on his movie, *Snuff* (if only in that such films come from South America.) As already seen in an earlier chapter, the publicity that Shackleton was garnering intensified when *Snuff* came under the auspices of the feminist groups. They protested the movie at every juncture, and every protestation led to another newspaper report or further TV coverage. Even when word of mouth had it that *Snuff* and the 'bloodiest thing that ever happened in front of a camera' was *not* entertaining, but was dire and awful, feminist action ensured that the public ought to check it out anyway. When it became evident that *Snuff*'s ambiguous ad campaigning – 'the picture they said could never be shown' – was indeed, nothing more than ambiguous ad campaigning, women groups pressed on. Until, eventually, *Snuff* the movie was gone, replaced by a legacy. A myth. "*Snuff* is the porn term for killing a woman for sexual pleasure. There is not even the seriousness of a word like *murder*," wrote Gloria Steinem in 1977. The image had become one with the act.

Snuff is the ethereal byword for “the ultimate in woman-hating” that floats around the pages of a feminist tract. It’s as ambiguous as Shackleton’s original ad campaign. Only now, twice as real.

In *Take Back the Night*, Laura Lederer holds an interview with a former nude model – a pseudonymous ‘Jane Jones’, in the business since 1967; retired in 1970.

LL: Were there ‘snuff’ films back then?

JJ: I heard about snuff films right after I stopped modelling. Stories came down the grapevine. One agency in Los Angeles sent a woman out on an assignment with a man who killed her and took pictures of how he tortured her. The business just froze. Models went to work with their boyfriends, and some stopped coming in altogether. Everyone was terrified. That didn’t last long though. People need money in order to live. My agency told me that that man had come to them, and that they had checked out his credentials and found they were false. Obviously the murdered woman’s agency didn’t check. We valued ourselves so little.

Usage of the word was always fleeting, as if constant reiteration of its definition (or mention of Shackleton’s movie) be proof enough of snuff’s existence. According to Gloria Steinem in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*: “. . . ‘snuff’ movies in which real women were eviscerated and finally killed have been driven underground (in part because the graves of many murdered women were discovered around the shack of one filmmaker) . . .”

Similarly, associating snuff with intolerable fascistic factions lent it some kind of credence. Charlotte Bunch, in her essay ‘Lesbianism and Erotica in Pornographic America’, argues: “If a Ku Klux Klansman says that he gets off at the sight of a lynching or a burning cross, do we therefore label his reaction as sexual rather than violent or racist? Do we ‘tolerate’ it simply as ‘freedom of sexual expression’? I hope not. Yet that is precisely what ‘snuff’ and thousands of other forms of pornography do regularly to women.” Steinem, on the other hand, rallies to “treat even friends and family members who support [pornography] as seriously as we would treat someone who supported and enjoyed Nazi literature or the teachings of the Klan.”

The shadowy figure that lurks behind all this apprehension



finally manifests itself in the closing pages of Susan G. Cole's book, *Pornography and the Sex Crisis*: "... 'snuff' films are advertised as showing the actual murder of women; this is meant to be the ultimate sexual turn-on. Although the original film (*Snuff*) was believed to be a hoax, the term still applies to the genre, and there is *no evidence that snuff films do not exist.*" [Our emphasis.] With Cole's defence it would be difficult to find fault with the arguments of a Holocaust revisionist.

When Shackleton's film was released onto video, ambiguity was a little less discreet than its previous theatrical campaign. The video copy ran:

*SNUFF* – the movie they said no producer could make, no distributor would release, and no audience could stomach. This is the one and only original legendary atrocity shot by Monarch Films in South America and New York, where human life is cheap! The mystery and controversy surrounding this vicious and violent venture remains clouded to this day. Many of the actors and actresses who dedicated their lives to making this film were never seen or heard from again.

*SNUFF* is the film that went too far – an overwhelming assault on the senses that delves into a degree of delirium deeper than any ever achieved before.

*SNUFF* contains scenes of sadism, bondage, bloodshed and mutilation too real to be simulated, too shocking to be ignored! Beautiful actresses, satanic slaves, bestial initiations, and gruesome gore beyond belief caused this picture to be banned. Are the killings in this film real? You be the judge!

In the UK, the film was one of the earliest and most notorious of the 'video nasties'. "A video dealer who stocked a 'snuff' movie which was too obscene for a jury to see walked away free from court," reported one video trade paper. Another quoted of a less fortunate video dealer brought before the courts, and for whom the prosecuting council "read out the chilling sleeve notes to the video tape" and then decided, "So realistic is the film that anyone viewing it must ask the question is that a real killing?" (Obviously the prosecution had yet to view the film.) Because of *Snuff*, most all 'videos nasties' were credited with strange mind-altering powers. Watching them could

induce trauma and mobilise the viewer into all manner of despicable acts – not least of all, murder. . .

The Video Recordings Bill was introduced in Britain in 1984. In a nutshell, it required that all videos must be classified along the lines that cinema films are classified by the BBFC. However, with the criterion that videos are for use in the home and that children might view them, a much tougher classification. To this extent, certain films – previously available in any high street video library – were now refused a certificate and outlawed. The term 'video nasty' commonly refers to those films refused certification. It is not a generic type of movie, nor does the term appear in the Bill itself. Coined in 1982, 'video nasty' – like 'snuff' – is just another aphorism for disgust that the tabloid press so dearly love to brandish.

When Michael Ryan took it upon himself to don paramilitary garb and embark on a killing spree in the town of Hungerford, 20 August 1987, it was the result of violent videos. The press, who conceived the rumour, avoided disclosing the fact that Ryan didn't own a video machine. Moreover, newspapers steered clear of the fact that they themselves had run a story, under the heading 'Rambo sniper on loose kills six', one week before Michael Ryan's rampage. This report informed readers – maybe Ryan himself – of an identical event in Melbourne, Australia when Julian Knight walked through the streets randomly shooting individuals. Prior to that, on 11 June another lurid piece titled 'Rambo knifeman's rampage of death' told of Lee Barker's kill spree. To suggest that Rambo and *First Blood* inspired Ryan to kill is no more a validated hypothesis than saying the *Daily Mail* triggered his killing spree. After the Hungerford massacre the *Mail* described the carnage as '. . . scenes straight from a horror video. . .'

Robert Sartin followed in Michael Ryan's footsteps on 30 April 1989. Strolling around Monkseaton, shotgun in hand, he shot and wounded 17 people. Before the day was out Sartin fatally blasted Kenneth Mackintosh, detonating both barrels of his father's gun into his chest at point blank range. Unlike Ryan, Sartin didn't turn the weapon on himself and his case came to trial a year after the event. Ample time to conjure a media-gratifying excuse for his unwarranted behaviour. 'I HEARD VOICE OF VIDEO MICHAEL' informed *The Sun*, running a picture of the cover-sleeve of *Halloween 4* on its front page. The report continued, 'Bloodbath gunman Robert Sartin was

ordered to kill by a voice from a video nasty. . . ' Not dwelling too much on the similarities with the Ryan case – other than pointing out that Sartin had visited Hungerford, the scene of Ryan's rampage, eight months before his own assault – *The Sun* focused its accusing eye on the movie. 'BLOODLUST ON FILM', insisted a sub-heading, concluding of the *Halloween* films that "Michael Myers is a teenage psychopath who hacks his family to pieces one by one . . . There are gallons of blood flying about and horrific close-ups of Myers savaging his terrified victims."

Why are the press so reluctant to suggest the possibility of direct copy-cat crimes, not from fiction, but from real-life? Is it because they will feel some inherent responsibility for initially publicising the mimicked atrocities? Or, responsibility for sewing the seeds of destruction in the minds of the already unstable?

Interesting are remarks made by authors Keith Soothill and Sylvia Walby in their book *Sex Crime in the News*: "The popular newspapers are primarily concerned with orchestrating public outrage . . . and are just not interested in focusing on the wider issues." In studying press handling of 'The Fox' case – a serial rapist similarly 'motivated' by 'video nasties', jailed in 1985 – they go on to add that: "Instead of a pornographic film or 'video nasty', the popular newspapers themselves provided a 'printed nasty', displaying all the unpleasant accoutrements of this notorious offender. Ironically, if these newspapers reflected on the type of explanation offered by the judge which they so readily espoused, then they would recognise that the explicit illustrations on the pages of these newspapers would provide the very fodder required for the 'sons' of The Fox."

Further moral hypocrisy is provided by author Guy Lyon Playfair, who wades between a love for cinema and his own conservative values in attempting to discern *The Evil Eye: The Unacceptable Face of Television*. "Who created the demand for the video nasty in the first place?" he asks, having already noted one eight-year-old boy who was left 'shattered' upon watching some unidentified film. Playfair suggests: "Responsibility for the video nasty problem lies as much with the TV companies for creating the demand as it does the perverts and psychopaths who satisfy it. And what can we expect when the video nasty audience becomes desensitised to yet another high in the hierarchy and needs something even higher?" Moments later he confides, "One of the most

memorable films I ever saw was Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*." Of course, it doesn't matter that Halliwell's *Film Guide* should think this film a 'thoroughly disagreeable suspenser': "Disagreeable it was, yet it was also a masterpiece . . . I saw it only once and never saw any other film like it. Had I done so two or three times a week for several years, I dread to think of the effects I would have suffered."

What is being said here? That the infrequency with which a film is viewed determines its social standing? Its status as a masterpiece? A hierarchy of video nasties doesn't exist; opinions of film do.

Unlike Playfair, Tim Tate in *Children for the Devil*, makes no such discrimination against horror films: they're *all* 'video nasties'.

Novels have done their share in propagating the snuff myth. Indeed, with the film industry now treating 'death on celluloid' more as a matter of course and as satire, it is the novelist who continues to incorporate the snuff theme as a horrifying aberration.

*The Sightseer* by Geoffrey Wolff [Hamish Hamilton, 1974], opens to a dead Vermont village, deserted except for 'a drive-in movie theatre where a few drivers and their dates sit idling, heat full on, waiting for the winter light to fall and *Gimme Shelter* to begin'. It's an existential novel about a filmmaker, Caleb Sharrow, who has nothing better to do with his life than embark on numerous 'distractions' (such as marriage). He is amoral; not really likable. Indeed, *Death Watch*, his first film, is an award-winning 25-minute study of his dying father. His brother accuses, "You'd blow up the world to film its end. Wouldn't you?" Replies Sharrow, "No, but if it were coming to an end, I'd like to spend my last few seconds shooting the event, and imposing some sense of beauty on it."

By the end of the book, Sharrow has been commissioned to make a film for a government agency. Stuck with completing the official version, he nonetheless endeavours to make a second, personal interpretation – one in which he eventually manipulates the death of his main actor.

*The Sightseer* is one of the few novels in the 1970s to utilize death on film as a central theme. Snuff wasn't as immediate in firing the imaginations of writers as it had been with filmmakers. Indeed, alongside Elmore Leonard's inspiration for John Frankenheimer's movie, *52 Pick-Up*, the earliest incorporations of the theme were movie tie-ins. Sam Hedrin's novelisation of *Network* [Sphere, 1977]

and Jack Martin's *Videodrome* [New English Library, 1983]. Bret Easton Ellis changed that, however, with his debut work, *Less Than Zero* [Picador, 1986]. Ellis takes some of the mythical motifs of what snuff films are, puts them within a fictional context and, consequentially, feeds them back into the media (the snuff film in *Less Than Zero* takes the form of a poor quality video; a one-room scenario in which a bound boy and girl are raped, tortured and killed by an unknown assailant). Set in affluent Los Angeles, the novel is not unlike *The Graduate* had Ken Kesey penned it. Backed by constant drugs and sex, inhabited by a generation of rich, bored, blond and tan youngsters, the acquisition of a snuff film is nothing but a rite of passage for the disaffected and barely causes a ripple in their lives. It is screened at a party and forgotten. Here snuff comes with the power of money; characteristic of the inordinately wealthy.

"Guy paid fifteen thousand for it."

The two boys who were playing Ms. Pac Man walk out onto the deck, holding drinks, and one tells Trent that he doesn't think it's real, even though the chainsaw scene was intense.

"I bet it's real," Trent says, somewhat defensively.

Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* [Serpent's Tail, 1991] is a cross between Ellis' *Less Than Zero* and that author's third novel, *American Psycho*. The fragmentary, Beat prose of the former; the vile excesses of the latter. It concerns Dennis, a character who, as a child, is shown photographs of a dead boy whose anus is badly mutilated. The image plagues him. As a young man – through a series of homosexual affairs – Dennis meets the boy from the photos who tells him it was all special effects work. Disillusioned, Dennis moves to Holland and lives in a windmill. With the help of two Germans he meets there, he abducts and murders several young boys from a nearby town. But, it's all a dream.

At one point in *Frisk*, a boy explains how a rich old guy he knew shot a snuff film with a cute Asian boy as the victim. The boy deliberates on his decision not to watch the film. "After that, you'd never be the same person again, I'm positive. Imagine it."

James Cohen's *Through a Lens Darkly* [Warner Books, 1993] sees the director of *Raw Death*, rig the cameras to record his own suicide. His partner decides to use the footage for *Raw Death 2*. Snuff lies at the heart of Robert Campbell's *In La-La Land We Trust*

[Mysterious Press, 1987]. Andrew Vachss' anti-hero Burke (kind of a Dirty Harry, Doc Savage and The Punisher rolled into one) sits through a snuff film in *Flood* [William Collins & Sons, 1986], while each subsequent adventure has him delivering his customary venom and loathing for 'human scum'. *Blossom* [Pan Books, 1991] is no exception (though by now, five novels of hate has shaved most of Burke's dialogue to monosyllables):

Them. Humans who kill for love. Torture for fun. They set fires to watch the flames. Black-glove rapists. Snuff film directors. Trophy-takers. Baby-fuckers. Pain turns on the switch. Blood lubricates the machinery. Then the power rush comes. And they do too. It's not sex. Castrate the freaks and they use broomsticks or Coke bottles.

A German production, *Confessions of a Blue Movie Star* (Andrzej Kostenko, 1982), is a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the porn movie industry. Once the dog-eared interviews with Roman Polanski (!) and the true-life case of a starlet who committed suicide are over, the end credit abruptly gives way to additional footage and an interview with a snuff filmmaker. The subject, none-too-convincing with a paper bag over his head, proceeds to show none-too-convincing snippets from his snuff film work – in actuality, scenes from Wes Craven's 1972 picture *Last House on the Left*.<sup>6</sup>

"Snuff movies by the backdoor." That is how one child psychiatrist described *Night Trap*, a new computer game, to the *Daily Express* [28 April 1993]. Under the header 'Ban evil snuff movie video game, says MPs', the newspaper reported how the Sega game showed women being drilled through the neck and hung up as their blood drained into bottles. "It promises hi-fi quality sound effects and games featuring real-life actresses, not cartoon characters," the report warned. Some three weeks later, *Night Trap* was again featured in the *Express*, only this time in a positive piece headed 'Out of this world, Mega CD puts life on screen'. A "horror spoof" the paper now called it.

In her book, *Pornography*, feminist author Andrea Dworkin says that, in 1975, 'organized crime' provided the porn industry with snuff films. In *Bizarre Sex*, Roy Eskapa says that snuff films "fetch thousands of dollars apiece on the black market once they reach their destination." Of course, revelations of such magnitude are rarely – if

ever – expanded upon. Where do these legends originate? Are they – like the Kentucky fried cat or the baby left on the roof rack – simply contemporary urban myths? Certainly, the regularity with which the stories pop up and the stubborn lack facts or figures that accompany them are apocryphally consistent.

Snuff as a commercial commodity is a fascinating, but illogical, concept. It reads well in crime fiction and, from the journalistic angle, its one of the all-time great moral panics to feed to the people; a malleable and terrifying supposition. Snuff is something unseen – on our very doorstep – but unseen. It can at once be the “prized possession” of paedophiles, or what rich people spend their money on. It is also one more ugly tendril of Satanism (which claims the lives of 50,000 people per annum in the US alone). It is the Chinese whisper at the end of the Leonard Lake and Charles Ng murder case. It is the past-time and hobby of the unknown Green River Killer. It is where discriminating evidence and the identity of the Zodiac can be found. It is an international conspiracy and the ultimate evil.

Snuff has the power to cloud the mind. It can turn the likes of *Guinea Pig 2: Flower of Flesh and Blood* – officially deemed a “simulation” – into a “very serious offence.” It can nudge the most asinine assumption and unlikely scenario into a bestselling autobiography or damning TV documentary. It can prompt women all over the world into fighting for a cause, and keep them fighting no matter that they’re levelling punches at their own shadows.

“The flipside of the New Age era is the rise of a Nasty Nineties culture,” ran *The Observer* [27 September 1992] in a piece entitled ‘Dark Side of the Loonies’. “The millennial spirit is flourishing and sex and death are being united again. Across the country, underground magazines and fanzines are springing up to deal with the growing interest in extreme literature and film.”

The piece was an indirect response to the video raids of May 1992 and the broadcast of Channel 4’s *Beyond Belief* documentary on the subject of Satanic child abuse. The London listings magazine, *Time Out*, had already carried a rabid condemnation of such ‘nasty nineties culture’. Now the media had an angle; it’s catchphrase. The word was ‘transgressive’: a transgressive publication, transgressive attitudes.

Around this time, towards the winter months of 1992, authors

Kerekes and Slater were among those approached with regard the phenomenon of 'transgressive' publishing. The proposed *Guardian* piece didn't make it into print. *The Observer* piece did. However, the line of questioning was such that they declined to comment on several instances. Anyone listening in on the questions put forward (or indeed, reading *The Observer* piece), might well be swayed into believing that 'new generation of alternative press' is an acronym for 'snuff'. Furthermore, it would seem the editors of such publications cannot help but turn to their 'favourite topic' of conversation at every given opportunity. Most of the interviewees in that piece look to have interjected, of their own accord, such damning asides as "I've never once been offered a snuff movie, for instance. . . ." or "If there isn't a snuff movie yet, the interest is surely enough to create a demand."

'Dark Side of the Loonies' concluded of the publishing underground: "Is evil contagious? Does it bring down both innocent and guilty alike? And if so, can some people plough through this material in the name of vigilance or research and remain immune?"

This transference of mass guilt onto a minority group (or groups), relates directly to the moral paradox at the core of the snuff phenomenon. It is evident that the outrage and furore over snuff reveals a tacit desire – indeed, a *need* – for it to exist, if only as an idea. Just as we had to create, say, the vampire as an embodiment of man's darker, unacceptable sexual urges, so too the mythic 'snuff-pedlar' – ultimate incarnation of the iconic serial killer – must carry the can for our death-lust.

It is doubtful whether anyone, given the chance to view a genuine snuff film, would pass up the opportunity. Death relates to the origins of the species and must form a large and integral part of our collective unconscious. Just as modern man is compelled to incorporate ritualism and symbolification into his everyday life, so must he experience – and exorcise – the primal. The scene of Pit Demitsch being devoured by lions is a spectacle which can be traced directly back to the Roman arena: an example of a decadent and declining society whose parallels with our own as we approach a third millenium cannot be ignored. The truth – recently epitomised by the 'live' coverage of the Gulf War – is that our 'greater sophistication' extends no further than the fact that we can now indulge our fascination with death and dismemberment, be it real or simulated, in the comfort of our own homes.



In fact, the media is so taken by the notion of snuff – genuine commercial snuff – that it leaps for the word at the merest insinuation, plasters it over two-column-inches. Like the obituaries of the famous, snuff copy sits on every news editor's desk. Waiting. It matters not each time this copy has been used to date, it has been premature; a lie. No raids have ever smashed a snuff film racket; no officers have ever seized a snuff video.

Brian Masters – author of *Killing for Company* and *The Shrine of Jeffrey Dahmer* – was being interviewed by John Lytle for *The Independent*. It was the day trading standards officers were to make public their biggest sweep, 7 May 1992. Masters stopped Lytle in his tracks to mention that the radio had just announced the seizure of hundreds of snuff movies. “You want to know why these things are so popular?” said Masters. “Because there are a lot of sick people out there.”

It doesn't take ‘evidence’ to corroborate a myth. Say it often enough, regularly enough and the myth will assert itself. A sensationalist blending of fact, fiction, and rumour took root in Ed Sanders' *The Family*. The years since have seen a stockpiling of falsehoods. Like the Jordan child abuse case in Minnesota, snuff may be attributed to some factual occurrence, but compounded with misinformation and scare-mongering it *becomes* the story . . . even after the initial accounts of celluloid slayings have been retracted.

Snuff is the ultimate debase. It is the logical step up from watching ‘video nasties’. It is a means by which the tabloids can prick public morality, and by recognising the term, the vigilant can remain immune.

# Appendix

## Notes

### Feature Film

#### 1. *Slaughter*

1. Shortly after *Slaughter* was completed and before *Snuff* was released, the husband-and-wife Findlay filmmaking team went their separate ways. Michael was among five killed in May of 1977, when the landing gear of a NY Airways helicopter collapsed during passenger embarkation at the heliport atop the Pan Am building in New York City. He was about to fly to Europe and demonstrate a new, innovative, portable 3D camera. Roberta set up her own film company: Reeltime. Much of Reeltime's output in the 1980s was porn. One such picture, *Glitter* [1983], starred Shauna Grant, a Minnesotan high school graduate whose fresh-faced innocence earned her \$100,000 as the industry's top up-and-coming starlet. But Shauna couldn't handle the pressures and, in 1984, age 20, shot herself dead. Such was Shauna's popularity, however, Roberta decided to resurrect the dead starlet the following year . . .

In his autobiography, *Raw Talent: the Adult Film Industry as Seen by its Most Popular Male Star*, Jerry Butler says of Findlay: "In 1985, she wanted to use me in a movie called *Shauna, Every Man's Fantasy*, which was a documentary-type movie supposedly about the suicide of Shauna Grant . . . I lost a lot of respect for Roberta when she did that Shauna film – especially because it had such a sick, sleazy feeling."

With high school film of a laughing and joking Shauna (real name: Colleen Applegate) and episodes from the starlet's short career, Roberta intercuts interviews with various friends and porn stars while they have sex. The conversation hovers constantly at an intense level of banality, with a nadir being proffered by 'actress' Karen Summer who, upon swinging her legs wide for the camera, states, "Shauna couldn't do this like *this!*"

Reviewing the movie for *Video Drive-In!*, Herb Schrader writes, "Using the same story structure as *Faces of Death*, a purported journalist from *Cinema Blue* (re. this film's Dr. Frances B. Gröss) traipses through porndom in search of Shauna's tragic motivations. Asks our host: . . . *DID PORNOGRAPHY KILL SHAUNA GRANT???*"

#### 2. *Hardcore*

1. Italy imitated the likes of *Dirty Harry* with Enzo G. Castellari's *La Polizia Incrimina, la Legge Assolve* [1973]; *The Exorcist* with Alberto De Martino's *The Antichrist* [1974]; *The Omen* with Alberto De Martino's *Holocaust 2000*

[1977]; *Jaws* with Ovidio Assonitis' *Tentacles* [1977]; *The Deer Hunter* with Antonio Margheriti's *The Last Hunter* [1979]; *Dawn of the Dead* with Lucio Fulci's *Zombie, Flesh Eaters* [1979]; *Star Wars* with Luigi Cozzi's *Starcrash* [1979]; *Alien* with Luigi Cozzi's *Contamination* [1980]; *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with Antonio Margheriti's *Hunters of the Golden Cobra* [1983]; *Mad Max 2* with Enzo G. Castellari's *The New Barbarians* [1983]; *First Blood* with Lamberto Bava's *Blastfighter* [1984]; *9½ Weeks* with Joe D'Amato's *11 Days, 11 Nights* [1987]. Some of the above spawned not only one, but two and sometimes three imitators . . . far too many to detail here.

2. Joe D'Amato (real name: Aristide Massaccesi) is perhaps *the quintessential* of Italian exploitation. He has an impossible number of pseudonyms (the most famous being D'Amato); he has been known to turn out ten movies in a single year; his work encompasses every generic of cinema (westerns, fantasy, war, horror and porno), with logic almost always taking a back-seat. Although he displays a remarkable flair for interesting camera angles and attractive shots (he began his career as a director of photography in the 50s), the movies are a combination of absolute tedium and moments of inspired vileness. His filmography is suitably endless.

3. The *Aurum Film Encyclopedia* provides sketchy information of another movie, "a German film starring Claudia Fielers [1976]", whose theme and release would also seem to have been inspired by *Snuff*.

### 3. Thrill Kill Video

1. Jesus Franco's *Cannibals* [1979], Franco's *The Devil Hunter* [1980], Giuseppe Maria Scotese's *Cannibali Domani* [1983], Roy Garrett's *Amazonia* [1986], and of course the peculiar hybrids: Aristide Massaccesi's *Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals* [1979], Franco Martinelli's *Zombie Holocaust* [1980] (zombies and cannibals in a movie that played as *La Regina dei Cannibali* where the latter flesh eater was a preference), Anthony Dawson's *Cannibal Apocalypse* [1980], and Joe D'Amato's *Anthropophagous the Beast* [1980].

2. Jean-Paul Lacmante, *Fantasy Film Memory* [#1].

3. Electric Pictures released *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in the UK in February 1992. Along with the shot of the dead woman with half a bottle stuck from her mouth being totally excised, the camcorder sequence was trimmed and re-edited. Now, along with much of the degradation of the family missing from the episode, an edit insert makes it clear *much earlier*

on that Otis and Henry are watching a re-run of the murder on their TV set. There seems to be some comfort in establishing that it is the two protagonists who are watching a snuff film and not us, the public. It isn't altogether sure whether the BBFC demanded this juxtaposition or it was imposed by Electric Pictures themselves.

4. Certainly *Henry* wouldn't be the first instance where sobriety proved a stumbling block for the BBFC. The progress of *Der Todesking* (with a self-imposed four-seconds of penis hacking already cut from it) was similarly fragile. After weeks of conferring – in which they deliberated that the movie “was very difficult” – the BBFC finally awarded *Der Todesking* an 18 certificate.

5. Naming his central figure Daniel Ray Hawkins, Mark Blair's 1987 picture, *Confessions of a Serial Killer*, is generally perceived to be a more accurate account of the life of Lucas. Here, the killers take polaroids of their victims.

## Mondo Film

### 4. A History of Mondo Cinema

1. Composers on *Mondo Cane* were Riz Ortolani and Nino Oliviero. If the films that followed didn't imitate their style, they were hiring Ortolani. He is responsible for the soundtracks of *Women of the World*, *Ecco*, *Africa Addio*, *Mal d'Africa*, *Brutes and Savages*.

2. On Germany's video shelves, a cut version of Wes Craven's *Last House on the Left* [1972] can be found languishing under the retitled *Mondo Brutale* in a mock mondo box.

3. *Karamoja* was played on a double bill with *Highway to Hell*, a film compiled of Nazi death camp footage. Kroger Babb described it as: “twenty-five minutes of the piles of corpses, the ovens filled with human ashes, the starved survivors, the hangings of the war criminals after the Nuremberg trials . . .” (Taken from David F. Friedman's autobiography, *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash-Film King*.)

4. Frost and producer Bob Cresse expanded on this sequence and, in 1968, released *Love Camp 7*, an exploitative drama dealing with Nazi atrocities.

5. Allegedly, *Mondo Hollywood* was supposed to feature The Mothers themselves, but their footage was cut for legal reasons. It does, however, have a lame Davie Allan & The Arrows track, *Moonfire*.

6. *Angeli Bianchi . . . Angeli Neri*, in all its different versions, contains footage of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. Ray Laurent's *Satanis* [1970], was a feature-length documentary on LaVey's church. Excerpts of *Satanis* are used in *The Occult Experience* [1985] and *Satanism and Witchcraft*, Volume 2 of the Fangoria Video Magazine Series, *Scream Greats* [1986].

7. Similarly, the rampaging animals of Prosperi's ecological horror movie, *Wild Beasts* [1984], belie the director's background in mondo filmmaking. Edited by Mario Morra, the animals, pursuing human prey, look every bit to have been taken from a mondo documentary.

8. Gabriel Axel's 1968 picture *Danish Blue*, attempted to combine straight documentary and comedy. Unsuccessfully tackling the 'pornography explosion' in Denmark, the humour is flat and renders the commentary invalid.

9. To tie-in with the film, a *Let Me Die a Woman* book – written by Dr. Wollman – was available circa 1978.

10. The 10th Stiges Fantasy Film Festival, Spain, screened a film titled *Viaje Al Mundo De Lo Desconocido*. The report in *Halls of Horror* magazine [August 1978] sounds very much as if *Viaje Al Mundo . . . and Journey Into the Beyond* are one and the same. The photograph which accompanied the report, however, is a scene to appear in the much later *Shocking Asia 2*.

11. Other titles released as part of the Gamma Chronicles include: *Target... Earth?* starring Victor Buono as Homer 2, an alien from outer space watching earthbound disaster footage on a TV monitor. *UFOs: It Has Begun* is a "most comprehensive study"; *UFO Syndrome* is an "intensive study of UFO sightings and abductions"; *Doomsday Chronicles* speculates "why is there a strong feeling we're standing on the brink of disaster?"; *World of Mystery* [1979/80] considers amoeba, "aliens among us as lower forms of life waiting to take charge"; *UFO Exclusive!* [1979] shows a throbbing psychedelic ink blot in space and is a "fresh look at a growing trend"; *Amazing World of Ghosts* [1979] follows "bigfoot, hoaxes, aberrations, rituals"; *Legends* ponders the Loch Ness monster and the "steel claws of the Bengal Tiger"; *Land of Celtic Ghosts* attempts to come to grips with the turbulent sprits of Ireland; *Mysteries of the Mind* is a peek at the untapped powers of thought (and includes Edgar D. Mitchell, US Navy, retired, last seen in *Journey Into the Beyond*); while, *In Search of Noah's Ark* asks "is the story of Noah really true?" then proves it is.

12. In Britain, *This is America* received a theatrical release as *Crazy Ridiculous American People* or, C.R.A.P. for short.

13. Video companies in the UK still use this ploy to achieve necessary certificates for sexually explicit material, ie. *The Lovers' Guide*, *Making Love*, *Loving Better*, etc. Again, the 'education' banner allows more to be shown than one could expect to see under 'entertainment'.

14. In Germany, soft porn education titles continued unabated following *Intim-Report* with many off-shoots: *Hausfrauen-Report*, *Ehemänner-Report*, *Ostfriesen-Report*, *Schlüsselloch-Report* . . . none of which could be classed as investigative by any stretch of the imagination.

15. Japan had instigated their own mondo industry following the success of *Mondo Cane*. Before the popularity of such films as *Of the Dead*, *Shocking Asia*, *Sweet and Savage*, *Faces of Death* and *Man, Man, Man* in the east, Japan's home-grown mondo product consisted almost entirely of striptease, cabaret, and girls. One of the earliest forays, Kelzo Ohno's *Nippon No Yoru* [1962] – an imitation of Blasetti's *European Nights* – set the formula for the Japanese mondo film from which few pictures deviated. With the exception of Tetsuji Takechi's *Women . . . Oh, Women!* [1963] and his follow-up *It's a Woman's World* [1964] – fewer still made it to foreign screens. Sadao Nakajima's *Nippon 69 – Sekkusu Ryōki Chitai* [1969], promised sex clubs, blue movie shoots, masochistic men submitting to a dominatrix, and sauna girls. Sadao Nakajima investigated similar sordidness in each of *Kyōi No Dokyumento: Nippon Yokujō Monogatari* [1971], *Sekkusu Dokyumento: Seitōsaku No Sekai* [1971], *Sekkusu Dokyumento: Erosu No Joō* [1973], and *Poruno No Joō: Nippon Sex Ryokō* [1973]. Hisako Tsukuba directed *The Sex Life: Hey Baby* in 1971.

16. Charles Gatewood is responsible for the 'Weird' series – *Weird Spring Break*, *Weird Biker Week*, *Weird San Francisco* and the compilation of all three, *Weird America* [1990] – roving reports from the underbelly of US life and living. He has also produced to date four-volumes of *Erotic Tattooing and Body Piercing* documentaries, all exploring the work and ideas of body extremists from around the world.

17. With the banning of his *Faces of Death 5* in Germany in 1993, Uwe Schier is said to have given up on mondo compiling.

18. Aka *Death Faces*, aka *Dying – The Last Seconds of Life*.

19. The usual selection of softcore investigation, George Smith's *Libidomania 2* was comprised of out-takes of the previous volume and included nude pageants, female wrestling, couples making love (filmed from across the street, through a window), Satanic orgies, and peep shows. In the preposterous end sequence, a search team in Africa is mobilised after two tourists go missing. The team close in on a single hut, moving stealthily through cannibal country; undetected through a clearing. They burst into the hut and find the tourists: one is badly decomposed and lies half-eaten in a corner; the other – a beautiful blond woman – is tied naked in another corner. A native is over-powered by the team. When the woman is cut free she grabs the knife and castrates her captor. The discovery of a cine camera provides the background on the story: the blond woman approaches the hut; her partner films the instance. She calls for the suspicious, shy native to come out. He does so and she begins to take off her clothes. Once inside the dwellings, she entices him into sex and calls for her partner to stop filming.

## 5. Death in Mondo Film

1. This bizarre sequence brings to mind David Cronenberg's snuff-oriented *Videodrome* and its deceased character Brian O'Blivion who, likewise, is kept alive through a vast series of videotapes.

2. Two of the people behind *Of the Dead*, Thierry Zeno and Dominique Gamy, were also responsible for *The Pig Fucking Movie* [19--], a tasteless feature involving a young man's relationship with the animals on his farm. Again, there is no narrative as such. The man plays with the nipples of a sow. When she defecates, he does likewise in an old bathtub in the yard. Eventually, the reason for this becomes 'clear'. The man mounts the pig (possibly a simulated act, though none of the other unpleasantaries are simulated) and she eventually gives birth. He takes the piglets and hangs them, observing the reaction of their mother and the chickens. He then kills the pig. Taking all of his excreta – which has been accumulating in the tub – and, mixing it with feathers and other scrapings, he boils the concoction and eats it. He vomits. He hangs himself.

3. Werner Herzog used the same setting for the opening title sequence in his atmospheric *Nosferatu the Vampyre* [1979], but with far more agreeable results.

4. The execution was filmed and shown on television in 1968.

5. Cazazza is an underground artist from San Francisco. He is known for

writing a song about Mary Bell and making the first art film to incorporate 'fist-fucking'.

6. *First Transmission* contained an alarming sequence depicting a bogus doctor conducting experiments on children. The footage was supposedly under investigation by the FBI. Whether the film is authentic is difficult to determine. Shot on Super-8, it showed children having low-voltage electrodes inserted beneath their skin for purposes of stimulation. The operations are conducted in motel rooms. Finally an adolescent boy has his penis amputated and an electrode attached to the remaining stump. The film was silent save for the whirr of the camera motor.

7. Tutti was a member of the industrial noise band Throbbing Gristle. The band ultimately sub-divided into two independent groups – Tutti's Creative Technology Institute and Orridge's Psychick TV/Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth.

8. Mark Pauline is the founder of Survival Research Laboratories, an industrious organisation involved with the manufacture of part-organic robots. The machines – a combination of dead animals and mechanical contraptions – are often driven to total destruction during performances.

9. Bougas claimed at the time of *Death Scenes*' release, that he intended to use the photos to make a deluxe coffee-table book. "It's definitely in the works," he said.

10. During the mid-1980s, Satanic ritual abuse and snuff movie production was hyped into an everyday, widespread problem, and it was this newfound hysteria that the *Faces of Death* creators used to further the myth.

## Death Film

### 6. *Babylon*

1. The barest tip of the iceberg.

2. Early group members supposedly included Oblivion (named after a lobotomy drug or something) and Ne/H/il, who supposedly killed himself. SPK is an acronym for: Surgical Penis Klinik (Industrial 7"), Systems Planning Korporation (first LP), Socialiste Patienten Kollektiev (second LP, and apparently named after some West German mental patients – inspired by the Baader-Meinhof gang – who killed themselves while attempting to make bombs in an institution), and SePuKu.



3. The *Guinea Pig* series is a confusing prodigy. Although the title credit of *Flower of Flesh and Blood* indicates it as a part 2, this episode – minus the opening and final minutes – is also part of ‘*Guinea Pig*’, a compilation of several short films. The collection includes *Unabridged Agony* – probably the closest simulation of a snuff movie ever – depicting particularly disturbing footage of the torture of a young woman. She is bound in a chair, in some basement, and surrounded by three masked men. Each take turns to slap one side of her face. A counter appears in the corner of the screen indicating the number of times she has been struck. When her cheek is suitably bruised and swollen – after 100 slaps – the screen fades. Still in the basement the woman is now kneeling, tied and blindfolded. The assailants surround and repeatedly kick and taunt her. Fade. Back in the chair, no blindfold, the skin of her hand and arm is pinched and twisted with pliers. Fade. Outdoors. Secured in an office-type chair, the victim is continuously spun around. The counter indicates revolutions. After 100 she is forced to drink a bottle of spirits. After 200 rotations she vomits. Fade. In the basement, headphones are taped around her ears and loud noise continually played. The indicator counts the hours. After five she is screaming. After 10, lurching against the bonds. After 20 hours she is convulsing and foaming at the mouth. Fade. Conscious again. Hair is torn from her scalp and a fingernail yanked out. Freeze frame. Fade. Basement. Tied spreadeagled to a bed. A pan containing heated cooking oil is sitting on a stove. The counter indicates the temperature: 70°. The fluid is poured on her arm which visibly reddens. The oil is now heated to 150° and poured again over her already-scalded limb. Fade. Maggots are sprinkled over her body and face. Fade. Still tied to the bed, but unconscious, raw offal is thrown over her. The men laugh. She comes to, screaming. Fade. A needle is being sharpened on a sanding-disc. The girl is back in the chair and gagged. Her head is pulled back, a chain around her throat. One man holds her head, another opens her eye and the third torturer drives the needle through the eyeball. End. No credits.

The screen wipes to a different story. A woman walking in a subway sees a box covered with a note. She lifts the lid to expose what appears to be a living stomach. The offal leaps from the box and pursues the screaming woman. Following a lengthy chase, it is eventually caught in a plastic bin by another woman. End. The third short film (possibly *He Never Dies*) opens to a pair of feet, with faces drawn on their soles, conversing. The owner of the feet, a young man, is preparing to commit suicide. He cuts his wrist but the bleeding soon stops despite the depth of the wound. Puzzled, he drives a ball-point pen through his arm. No pain. No blood. He chops his hand clean off then slices his throat. After a failed strangling attempt he telephones a friend who comes to his apartment. The suicidal man confronts

his buddy with a knife but turns it on himself, cutting open his abdomen. He reaches into the wound, removes various organs, and throws them at his friend. End. Next (in *Slaughter Special*), a man is being interviewed on some kind of talk-show. His stomach has a comical prosthetic face growing from it. The man converses with the facial parasite. He goes into the streets and dances, posing with members of the public. End. At this point *Flower of Flesh and Blood* commences with the woman tied to the bed – no abduction, no chicken killing. The film runs to the point where the Samurai smokes his cigarette then ends.

To add further confusion, yet another feature – depicting a stunted, dwarf-like doctor conducting bizarre experiments on a woman, culminating in her mutilation – is titled *The Guinea Pig 2*. Possible subtitles for this film include *The Devil Sent a Woman's Doctor*, or *Gynaecologist From Hell*, or *Mutant of Notre Dame*.

4. Because of scarcity, most copies of *Guinea Pig* are relegated to being third, fourth, even fifth generation video copies.

5. Belli was the lawyer to receive a letter from the Zodiac killer.

6. Schroeder is also responsible for the strange *La Vallée* [1972], was once assistant to Jean-Luc Godard and directed *Single White Female* [1992].

7. The authors saw *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* as part of a touring programme of short films called 'The Body In Extremis'. The films showcased in the programme included Brakhage's own *Window Water Baby Moving*; Jan Svankmajer's *The Ossuary* [1970], a 10-minute study of the Sedlec church decorated by thousands of human skulls and bones from the Hussite wars and Great Plague; and Kurt Kren's *Reel III 16/67* [1967]. A theatre staff member issued the warning that the last film, *The Act of Seeing* . . . contained autopsy footage and a previous screening in Liverpool had ended with fainting among the audience; anyone wishing a refund could obtain one now. No one did.

## **7. Death in the Media**

1. The envelopes contained Dwyer's organ donor card, details for funeral arrangements and a letter addressed to Governor Casey stating that he had not resigned his post but remained Treasurer until the end. The letter also suggested his wife should be considered as his successor.

2. The full sequence is now viewable on the video *Death Scenes II*, as is R.

Budd Dwyer's bloody demise. Dwyer's death can also be found in *Mondo Cane VI*, *Cathode Fuck*, *Assault Video*, *News Nightmares*. . . and, no doubt, many others.

3. *America's Funniest Home Video* and *You've Been Framed!* are showcases for viewers' 'funny' home-shot videos. But what's so funny about an army tank going out of control and crushing half a dozen cars in a parking lot (as in one clip shown in the latter) – or is it funny because no one was killed? And increasingly evident in the funny video shows are the bogus clips screened, those in which viewers have manufactured a slapstick scenario. An uneasy parallel would be viewers manipulating scenarios for the more 'serious' pro-active TV shows.

4. The confidence and rapidity with which FBI spokesman Bob Ricks informed press of the 'fire is lit' statement and that gunshots were heard, confirm licit eavesdropping rather than alleged survivor statements. Those survivors interviewed claimed there was no suicide pact planned.

5. Down the years, an audiotape – and numerous transcripts thereof – have come into circulation of the Reverend Jim Jones inciting the congregation of his People's Temple to die. On a settlement deep in the jungles of Guyana, South America, as the 914 followers of Jones sipped on Kool-Aid laced with Valium and cyanide, the reels of Jones' hidden tape-recorder turned. Told that swallowing the poison would lead to a painless death, the congregation are panicking now that the children – the first to take the drink – are going into convulsions. Jones can be heard for the duration of the recording, pleading with his followers to die with dignity; die with respect. " . . . Mother mother mother mother mother mother, please, mother please, please, please, don't do this, don't do this. Put down your life with your child, but don't do this. [pause] Free at last! [cheering and handclapping] Keep . . . keep your emotions down, the Kool-Aid will not hurt if you be quiet. If you be quiet. [scream] . . ." The Guyana massacre tape was discovered at the scene of mass suicide and murder in November 1978. It ran approximately 40 minutes and was held by the FBI. Shortly after the event NBC television acquired a two-minute extract of the tape and broadcast it. The whole tape eventually became available through underground sources.

## 8. Propagating a Myth

1. The original 1967 print of Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising* is rumoured to be buried in Death valley.

2. In Anton LaVey's biography, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, author Blanche Barton says that since the airing of *The Devil Worshipers*, "a renewed mythology has formed around Satanism. The catalogue of blood-curdling and spine-chilling 'true stories' about Satanists hark back in style and content to Julius Streicher's anti-Jewish propaganda – sucking the blood from Christian children through a straw."

3. *Dispatches* had already met with criticism over their 'scoop of the year', a programme entitled *The Committee* aired in October of 1991. It purported to reveal the existence of an official conspiracy to murder republicans in Northern Ireland. In order to protect the identity of "Source A", the anonymous central witness in the film, Channel 4 were prepared to go to court. However, in May of 1993, the very man whose identity the station sought to protect, claimed the programme to be a hoax and that he had been promised £5,000 to recite a prepared script.

4. Curiously, although British forensics reported that the mutilation was performed on a dummy, a further statement that the dummy had a *superimposed image of a real girl's face*, is not true. Nor, for that matter, the report by the *Daily Mirror* which claimed: "... a clever fake with an actress's head superimposed on a corpse."

5. Discussing the raids, TV presenters showed their disgust and disbelief upon hearing that some of the videos confiscated depicted real autopsies. Three days *before* the event, the BBC aired a documentary presenting the work of a South American pathologist. A fair portion of the programme was given to the detailed and lengthy evisceration of a child.

6. Prior to *Last House on the Left*, Wes Craven had worked with producer Sean Cunningham on sex comedies. *Confessions of a Blue Movie Star* is co-directed by Craven.

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## Selected Filmography

**Key:** *d*: Director. *exec p*: Executive producer. *p*: Producer. *assoc p*: Associate producer. *asst d*: Assistant director. *sc*: Script. *wr*: Writer. *comm*: Commentary. *ph*: Photography. *ed*: Film editor. *m*: Original music. *w*: With. Those names in brackets [ ] succeed a pseudonym and are real names.

### **ADDIO ULTIMO UOMO**

Aka: *The Last Savage*. Aka: *Cannibale Brutal* (?)

Italy, 1978. *d*: Angelo & Alfredo Castiglioni. *wr*: Vittorio Buttafava. *d ph*: Alfredo Castiglioni. *ed*: Rita Olivati Rossi. *m*: Franco Godi. *narrator*: Riccardo Cucciolla.

### **AFRICA ADDIO**

Aka: *Africa Blood and Guts*. UK title: *Farewell Africa*

Italy, 1966. *d/wr/ed*: Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi. *d ph*: Antonio Climati. *m*: Riz Ortolani. *asst ed*: Clara Mattei, Maria Gianandrea. *tech supervisor*: Paolo Ketoff. *general organisation*: Stanis Nievo. *narrator*: Frank Latimore. *Original running time*: 138 mins (*various running times outside Italy of*: 120 mins & 80 mins) (*running time of Africa Blood and Guts*: 83 mins).

### **AFRICA AMA**

Aka: *Africa Ama Erotic*. German video title: *Das Ist Afrika*

Italy, 1971. *d/sc*: Guido Guerrasio. *co-d*: Alfredo Castiglioni, Angelo Castiglioni, Oreste Pellini. *p*: Alberto Grimaldi. *ph*: Alfredo Castiglioni, Angelo Castiglioni. *m*: Angelo Francesco Lavagnino.

### **AFTER MEIN KAMPF**

Aka: *Ravaged*

USA, 1961. *d/wr*: Ralph Porter. *asst d*: Carol Littenberg. *p*: Joseph Brenner. *assoc p*: Ted Marshall. *ed*: Stan Norvin. *narrator*: Jonathan Farwell. *Original running time*: 74 mins (*Ravaged running time*: 64 mins).

### **ANGELI BIANCHI . . . ANGELI NERI**

Aka: *The Satanists*. Aka: *Witchcraft '70*

Italy, 1969. *d*: Luigi Scattini. *sc/ed*: Luigi Scattini. *ph*: Claudio Racca. *m*: Piero Umiliano. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. *Original running time*: 95 mins (UK: 86 mins) (*additional sequences for Witchcraft '70 ph/d*: R.L. Frost).

### **THE ART OF DYING**

USA, 1991. *d*: Wings Hauser. *p*: Richard Pepin, Joseph Merhi. *w*: Wings Hauser (Jack), Kathleen Kinmont (Holly), Gary Wermtz (Rosco), Mitch Hara (Latin Jerry), Michael J. Pollard (Delbert).

**AUTOPSY**

Original title: *Autopsia*. Aka: *Macchie Solari* (?)

Spain, 1973. *d*: Juan Logar. *esta historia la han realizado*: Vincente Acitores, José Aguayo Jr., Juan Aguilar, Gregorio Alonso, Jack Taylor

...

**BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE**

South Africa, 1974. *d*: Jamie Uys. *p/sc/ph/led/comm*: Jamie Uys. *narrator*: Paddy O'Byrne. 93 mins.

**BEYOND THE DARKNESS**

Original title: *Buio Omega*. Aka: *Blue Holocaust*. Aka: *Buried Alive*  
Italy, 1979. *d*: Joe D'Amato [Aristide Massaccesi]. *p*: Marco Rossetti. *sc*: Ottavio Fabbri, Giacomo Guerrini. *w*: Kieran Canter (Francesco), Cinzia Monreale (Iris), Franca Stoppa, Sam Modesto.

**BODY WORKS**

Australia, 1988. *d*: David Caesar. *p*: Glenys Rowe. *ed*: Greg Bell. *research & original concept*: Chris Pip. *ph*: Rey Carlson. *m*: David Bridie, John Philips. *post mortem monologue sc*: Dr. Karl S. Kruszelnicki. *post mortem monologue voice*: Margot Nash.

**BORN TO RAISE HELL**

USA, 1976. *conceived/d*: Roger Earl. *d ph*: Ray Tamargo. *ed*: Robert Shaw. *special m*: Rod Riker. *w*: Val Martin, Steve Richards, John Detour, Eric Lansing.

**BRUTES AND SAVAGES**

Original title: *The Arthur Davis Expedition in Brutes and Savages*.

USA, 1975. *d/p*: Arthur Davis. *assoc p*: Miyako Ejiri. *ph*: Jaime Questa, Jorge Ruiz, Antonio Dio, Charles Boyd, Mike Carter. *narration wr*: Jenny Craven. *m*: Riz Ortolani.

**CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**

Italy, 1979. *d*: Ruggero Deodato. *p*: Giovanni Masini. *d ph*: Sergio D'Offizi. *story/sc*: Gianfranco Clerici. *ed*: Vincenzo Tomassi. *m*: Riz Ortolani. *w*: Robert Kerman, Francesca Ciardi, Perry Pirkanen, Luca Giorgio Barbareschi, Salvatore Basile. *Original running time*: 95 mins (UK video release: 88 mins).

**CONTRA CONSPIRACY**

USA, 199-. *d*: Tom De Weir. *exec p*: Ronald L. Gilchrist. *p*: Richard Pepin, Joseph Merthi. *assoc p*: Charla Driver. *d ph*: Voya Mikulic. *wr*: Tom De Weir, Mark Robles, Charles T. Kaniganis. *ed*: Steve Waller. *m*: John Gonzales. *w*: Michael Williams, Tom Maher, Blake Bahner, Robert Beal, R.J. Walker.

**DAYS OF FURY**

Netherlands (?), 1979. *wr/d*: Fred Warshofsky. *exec p*: Doro Vlado Hreljanovic. *assoc p*: Donald Stillman, Jr. *p*: Doro Vlado Hreljanovic,

Fred Warshofsky. *based on the book: Doomsday: The Science of Catastrophe by: Fred Warshofsky. host/narrator: Vincent Price.*

#### **DEATH: THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY**

USA, 1975. *p/wrld: Robert Emenegger, Allan Sandler. assoc p: Anne Spielberg. d ph: Hans Beimler. asst cameraman: Paul Dillingham. ed: Ken Lavet, Elen Orson. m: Robert Emenegger. w: Cameron Mitchell, Gloria Prince (Psychologist), Don Felipe (Caretaker), Harry G. Armstrong (Maj. Gen. USAF), Margaret Emenegger (Passenger). 97 mins.*

#### **THE DEATHMASTER**

Original US title: *Deathmaster*

USA, 1973. *d: Ray Danton. p: Fred Sadoff. assoc p: Robert Quarry. asst d: William Duffy. sc: R.L. Grove. ph: Wilmer C. Butler. ed: Harold Lime. m: Bill Marx. w: Robert Quarry (Khorda), Bill Ewing (Pico), Brenda Dickson (Rona), John Fielder (Pop). Original running time: 88 mins (UK running time: 75 mins).*

#### **DEATH SCENES**

USA, 1989. *p: Nick Bougas. sc: Nick Bougas, F.B. Vincenzo. exec p: Ray Atherton. ed: Sandy Weinberg. m: Richard Gibson. special ph: Tim Armstrong.*

#### **DEATH SCENES 2**

USA, 1992. *p/d: Nick Bougas. exec p: Ray Atherton. 82 mins.*

#### **I DEMONI**

Original title: ?

USA, 1973. *d: Jerry Jameson. p: Joseph E. Bishop, Art Jacobs. m: The Harvest. w: Michael Forest, Paul Carr, Michael Pataki, Lee De Broux, Nancy Beck, Ben Archibeck.*

#### **DESPAIR**

Aka: *Despair S.P.K.*

Great Britain, 1982. *filmed by: Steven Jones, Dominik Guerin. p: Kolleen Forde, D. Guerin. visuals by: D. Guerin. special thanks to: Oblivion, Karel Van Bergen, Jack Pinker, Nocturnal Emissions, NE/H/IL. 60 mins.*

#### **EMANUELLE IN AMERICA**

Italy, 1976. *d: Joe D'Amato [Aristide Massaccesi]. p manager: Fabrizio De Angelis. sc: Maria Pia Fusco. story: Ottavio Alessi, Piero Vivarelli. d ph: Aristide Massaccesi. ed: Vincenzo Tomassi. m: Nico Fidenco. English version: Nick Alexander. w: Laura Gemser (Emanuelle), Gabriele Tinti, Roger Browne, Riccardo Salvino, Lars Bloch, Paolo Senatore. Original running time: 100 minutes (UK running time: 87 mins).*

#### **ENCOUNTER WITH DISASTER**

USA (?), 1979. *p*: Charles E. Sellier Jr. & James L. Conway. *ed*: Michael Spence, John Forrest Niss. *m*: Bob Summers, Andrew Belling, George S. Price. *wr*: Wallace Bennett. *narrator*: Brad Crandall. 89 mins.  
**EXCUSE ME, DO YOU LIKE SEX?**

Original title: *Scusi, lei Conosce il Sesso?*

Italy, 1968. *d*: Vittorio De Sisti. *p*: Tonino Cervi. *sc*: Piero Bellanova. *ph*: Danilo Desideri. *ed*: Manilo Vianelli, Vittorio De Sisti. *m*: Angelo Francesco Lavagnino, Piero Umiliani. *w*: Gianni Pulone, Mirella Panfili. *narrator of English version*: Edmund Purdom. 90 mins.

### **FACES OF DEATH**

USA, 1978. *d*: Conan Le Cilaire. *exec p*: William B. James. *p*: Rosilyn T. Scott. *assoc p*: Susan West. *wr*: Alan Black. *ph USA*: Michael Golden, Stephen Crowder. *ph Europe*: Dimetri Fermo, Wolfgang Offebach. *m*: Gene Kauer. *creative consultant/narrator*: Dr. Frances B. Gröss (Michael Carr).

### **FACES OF DEATH II**

USA, 1981. *d*: Conan Le Cilaire. *p*: Rosilyn T. Scott. *wr*: Alan Black. *d ph American team*: Peter B. Good. *d ph European team*: Dimetri Fermo. *m*: Gene Kauer. *consultant narrator*: Dr. Frances B. Gröss (Michael Carr).

### **FACES OF DEATH III**

USA, 1985. *d*: Conan Le Cilaire. *p*: Rosilyn T. Scott. *exec p*: William B. James. *wr*: Alan Black, Veronica Lakewood. *m*: Gene Kauer. *consultant narrator*: Dr. Frances B. Gröss (Michael Carr).

### **FACES OF DEATH IV**

USA, 1990. *d*: Conan Le Cilaire. *exec p*: Kenzo Kuroda. *co-p/co-d*: Susumu Saegusa, Andrew Theopolis. *assoc p*: Sally John. *wr*: James B. Schwartz. *d ph*: Peter B. Good. *ph USA*: Michael Murray, Mark Erikson, Wolfgang Offebach. *ph Europe*: Demetri Fermo, Alberto Einsteinino. *m*: Barington Van Campen. *ed*: Michael Murray, Armondo Pinto. *tech consultant*: Dr. Louis Fjellis.

### **FAMILY MOVIES**

Aka: *Manson Family Movies*. Aka: *Manson Home*

USA, 1984. *d*: John Aes-Nihil. *exec p*: Michael H. *original murder music*: Beyond Joy & Evil. *screams by*: King Mama. *titles*: Black Sapphire. *w*: The Precious Dove (Charlie), John (Tex), Katie Lazarus, Knarly Dana, Krista Meth (Sadie Mae), Miss Star & Transmuted Ms. Mule (Sharon).

# **FAREWELL UNCLE TOM**

Original title: *Zio Tom*.

Aka: *Uncle Tom*. Aka: *Addios Zio Tom*.

Italy, 1971. *dir/sc/led*: Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi. *asst d*: Federico Abussi. *ph*: Claudio Cirillo, Antonio Climati, Benito Frattari. *m*: Riz Ortolani. *Original running time*: 130 minutes (*UK running time*: 90 mins).

## **52 PICK-UP**

USA, 1986. *d*: John Frankenheimer. *p*: Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc*: Elmore Leonard, John Stepping. *based on the novel by*: Elmore Leonard. *w*: Roy Scheider (Harry Mitchell), Ann-Margret (Barbara Mitchell), Vanity (Doreen), John Glover (Alan Ralmy), Clarence Williams III (Bobby Shy), Doug McClure (Mark Averson). 106 mins.

# **GÉNÉRAL IDI AMIN DADA**

Aka: *General Amin*

France, 1974. *d*: Barbet Schroeder. *p*: Jean-François Chauvel. *sc*: Barbet Schroeder. *ph*: Nestor Almendros. *ed*: Denise de Casabianca. *m*: Idi Amin Dada. 90 mins.

# **GIMME SHELTER**

USA, 1970. *d*: David Maysles, Albert Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin. *exec p*: Ronald Schneider. *assoc p*: Porter Bibb. *ph*: David Maysles, Albert Maysles, Peter Adair, Baird Bryant, Joan Churchill, Ron Dorfman, Robert Elfstrom, Elliott Erwitt, Bob Fiori, Adam Giffard, William Kaplan, Kevin Keating, Stephen Lighthill, George Lucas, Jim Moody, Jack Newman, Pekke Niemela, Robert Primes, Eric Saarinen, Peter Smokler, Paul Ryan, Coulter Watt, Gary Weiss, Bill Yarrus. *ed*: Ellen Giffard, Joanne Burke, Robert Farren, Kent McKinney. *w*: The Rolling Stones, Ike and Tina Turner, Jefferson Airplane. 90 mins.

# **THE GUINEA PIG 2**

Aka: *Gynaecologist from Hell* (?). Aka: *Mutant of Notre Dame* (?).

Aka: *The Devil Sent a Woman's Doctor* (?)

Japan, (late-80s). *d*: Kazuhito Kuramoto. *p*: Satoru Ogura. *wr*: Kenji Tani, Satoru Ogura. *s*: Kazuhito Kuramoto, Mitsuo Mutsuki, Yoshikazu Iwanami. *w*: Toshihiko Hino, Mio Tanagi, Tomorrow Taguchi, Yumi Iori, Mirei.

# **HARDCORE**

Aka: *The Hardcore Life*.

USA, 1978. *d/sc*: Paul Schrader. *exec p*: John Milius. *p*: Buzz Feitshans. *asst d*: Richard Hashimoto, Kim C. Friese. *ph*: Michael Chapman. *ed*: Tom Rolf. *m*: Jack Nitzche. *w*: George C. Scott (Jake Van Dorn), Peter Boyle (Andy Mast), Season Hubley (Niki), Dick

Sargent (Wes De Jong), Leonard Gaines (Ramada). 108 mins.

### **HELGA**

West Germany, 1967. *disc*: Erich F. Bender. *p*: Karl-Ludwig Ruppel. *ph*: Klaus Werner, Fritz Baader. *ed*: Monika Pfefferle, Ilse Wüstenhöfer. *m*: Karl Barthel. *tech advisers*: Dr. Erwin Burcik, Dr. Gerhard Doering, Dr. Wolfgang Fritsche. *w*: Ruth Gassmann (Helga), Eberhard Mondry (Helga's Husband), Asgard Hummel, Ilse Zielstorff. 77 mins.

### **HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER**

USA, 1986. *d*: John McNaughton. *p*: John McNaughton, Lisa Dedmond, Stephen A. Jones. *sc*: Richard Fire, John McNaughton. *ph*: Charlie Lieberman. *m*: Robert McNaughton, Ken Hale. *w*: Michael Rooker (Henry), Tom Towles (Otis), Tracy Arnold (Becky).

### **THE HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE**

Original title: *El Jorobado de la Morgue*

Aka: *The Rue Morgue Massacre*

Spain, 1972. *d*: Javier Aguirre. *p*: Lara Polop *ph*: Raul Perez Cubero. *m*: Carmelo Bemaola. *w*: Pauly Naschy [Jacinto Molina], Rossana Yanni, Vic Winner [Victor Alcazar], Alberto Dalbes, Maria Perschy.

### **LES INTERDITS DU MONDE**

France, (1986?). *d*: Chantal Lasbats. *ph*: Dominique Renson. *ed*: Dominique Caseneuve, Sylvie Bourget, Eric Carlier, Bertrand Lepaysan. *m*: Big Bucks. *narrator*: Monique Pantel.

### **IS THERE SEX AFTER DEATH?**

USA, 1971. *p/wrld*: Jeanne Abel, Alan Abel. *assoc p*: Michael Rothschild. *d ph*: Gerald Cotts. *w*: Buck Henry (Dr. Manos), Alan Abel (Dr. Rogers), Marshall Efron (Vince Domino), Jim Moran (Dr. Elevenike), Holly Woodlawn, Robert Downey. 97 mins.

### **JOURNEY INTO THE BEYOND: THE WORLD OF SUPERNATURAL**

Original title: *Reise ins Jenseits – Die Welt Des Übernatürlichen*

Aka: *Viaje Al Mundo De Lo Desconocido* (?)

West Germany, 1975. *d*: Rolf Olsen. *p*: Rudolf Kalmowicz. *co-p/co-ordinator in Brazil*: Roland Henze. *p supervisor in USA*: Dr. Frank Lang. *ph*: Frank X. Lederle. *ed*: Alfred Srp, Brigitte May. *m*: Sonoton. 113 mins.

### **KWAHERI – VANISHING AFRICA**

USA, 1964. *d/p*: Thor Brooks, David Chudnow. *exec p*: David Chudnow. *ph*: Miki Carter. *wr*: Michael Vittes. *ed*: Thor Brooks. *m*: Byron Ross. *narrator*: Les Tremayne. 52 mins.

### **THE KILLING OF AMERICA**

USA, 1981. *d*: Sheldon Renan. *co-p*: Filmlink Corporation, Towa Production Co. *assoc p*: Betsy Pollock. *wr*: Leonard Schrader, Chieko

Schrader. *original m*: Mark Lindsay, W. Michael Lewis.

### **KING ELEPHANT**

Original US title: *The African Elephant*

USA, 1971. *d*: Simon Trevor. *p*: William N. Graf, Monty C. Ruben. *asst d*: Laila Trevor, James Kamau. *sc*: Simon Trevor, Monty C. Ruben. *ph*: Simon Trevor. *ed*: Alan L. Jaggs. *m*: Laurence Rosenthal. *song*: *Rain Falls Everywhere It Wants To* by Laurence Rosenthal, Alan and Marilyn Bergman; sung by Lovelace Watkins. *comm*: Alan Landsburg. *narrator*: David Wayne. 92 mins.

### **LABYRINTH OF SEX**

Original title: *Nel Labirinto del Sesso*

Italy, 1969. *d*: Alfonso Brescia. *p*: Ovisio G. Assonitis, Giorgio Carlo Rossi. *asst d*: Edgardo Siroli, Franco Fogagnolo. *sc*: Giacinto Ciaccio, Massimo D'Avack. *story*: Giorgio Carlo Rossi. *ph*: Fausto Rossi. *ed*: Emilio Lopez. *m*: Italo Fischetti. *scientific consultant*: Prof. Emilio Servadio. *w*: Orchidea Se Santis (Anna), Franco Ressel (Fetishist), Susy Anderson (Nymphomaniac), Edgardo Siroli (Sadist). *Original running time*: 95 mins (UK: 84 mins).

### **THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE**

Sweden, 1969. *d*: Torgny Wickman. *p*: Inge Ivarson. *ph*: Max Wilén. *m*: Mats Olsson. *w*: Inge Hegeler, Sten Hegeler, Maj-Brith Bergström-Walan.

### **LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET**

Aka: *The Fun House*

USA (?), 1977. *d*: Victor Janos. *p*: Norman F. Kaiser. *d ph*: Alexander Tarsk. *make-up/special effects*: Kevin Heatley. *m*: Claude Armand. *wr*: Brian Laurence. *tech d*: Kevin Whitcomb. *ed*: Brian Newett. *w*: Steven Morrison (Terry Hawkins), Dennis Crawford (Ken Hardy), Lawrence Bonman, Janet Sorley, Paul Phillips.

### **LESS THAN ZERO**

USA, 1987. *d*: Marek Kanievski. *p*: Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner. *1st asst d*: Deborah Love. *sc*: Harley Peyton. *based on the novel by*: Bret Easton Ellis. *m*: Thomas Newman. *w*: Andrew McCarthy (Clay), Jami Gertz (Blair), Robert Downey Jr. (Julian), James Spader (Rip). 94 mins.

### **LET ME DIE A WOMAN**

USA, 1973 (released in 1978). *d*: Doris Wishman. *ph*: Juan Fernandez. *ed*: Lou Burdi. *m*: Thomas Valentino. *scientific & medical advisor*: Leo Wollman, MD. *w*: Leslie, Deborah Harten, Lisa Carmelle, Frank Pizzo, Tim Long, Carol Sands, Billy Kelman. 72 mins.

### **LIBIDOMANIA**

Original title: *Le Aberrationi*

German title: *Libidomania Alle Abarten dieser Welt*

Italy, (late 70s/early 80s?). *d/sc*: Jimmy Matheus [Bruno Mattei]. *p*: L.A. Pink. *d ph*: Luis Chickens. *m*: John Servus.

### **LIBIDOMANIA 2**

Original title: *Le Aberrazioni II* (?)

German title: *Sexual Perversion Libidomania 2*

Italy, (late-70s/early-80s?). *d*: George Smith. *p*: Serge Courtenay. *sc*: Clide Fergusson. *ph*: Luis Chickens. *m*: Giacomo Dell'Orso.

### **LIVE! FROM DEATH ROW**

USA, 1991. *d/wr*: Patrick Duncan. *exec p*: Michael Nolin. *p*: Julie Bilson Ahlberg. *ed*: Rick Blue. *w*: Bruce Davison (Dvorak), Joanna Cassidy (Alana), Art LaFleur (Lockart), Calvin Levels (Kenny), Julio Oscar Mechoso (Reyes).

### **THE LONDON NOBODY KNOWS**

Great Britain, 1967. *d*: Norman Cohen. *p*: Norman Cohen. *sc*: Geoffrey Fletcher (based on his book). *addit material*: Brian Comport. *ph*: Terry Maher. *ed*: David Gilbert. *m*: music hall songs. *narrator*: James Mason. *Original running time*: 53 mins (*UK running time*: 48 mins).

### **LOVE**

Original title: *Mondo de Amore Cruel*

Italy, (late-70s/early-80s?). *d*: Claudio Racca. *production manager*: Teodoro Agrini. *ph*: Maurizio La Monica. *comm*: Carlo Romano. *ed*: Gianpaolo Tassarolo. *narrators*: Christopher Cruise, Sylvia Faver.

### **MAL d'AFRICA**

Italy, 1967. *d*: Stanis Nievo. *p*: Angelo Rizzoli. *sc*: Stanis Nievo. *ph*: Antonio Climati. *ed*: Franco Attenti. *m*: Riz Ortolani. *narrator*: Leslie Daniel. *Original running time*: 105 mins (*UK*: 89 mins).

### **MAN BEHIND THE SUN**

Aka: *Men Behind the Sun*. Aka: *Squadron 731*.

Hong Kong, 1987. *d*: T. F. Mous. *p*: Fu Chi. 105 mins.

### **MAN BITES DOG**

Original title: *C'est Arrivee Pres de Chez Vous*

Belgium, 1992. *d/p*: Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde. *sc*: Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, Vincent Tavier. *asst d*: Vincent Tavier. *ph*: André Bonzel. *ed*: Rémy Belvaux, Eric Dardill. *m*: Jean-Marc Chenut. *w*: Benoît Poelvoorde (Ben), Rémy Belvaux (Reporter), André Bonzel (Cameraman), Jean-Marc Chenut (Patrick), Alain Oppezzi (Franco), Vincent Tavier (Vincent). 95 minutes. *English subtitles*.

### **MAN MAN MAN**

Italy, (1970s?). *d/p/sc/ph*: Lionetto Fabbri. *p*: Clessidra Film. *text of the comm*: Sergio Saviane. *m*: Alessandro Alessandrini.



**MANSON**

Aka: *Manson & "Squeaky" Fromme*

USA, 1972. *d/p*: Robert Hendrickson, Laurence Merrick. *asst d*: Betty Adams. *sc/comm*: Joan Huntington. *ph*: Leo Rivers, Mike Thomas, Marvin Haskell, Joanne Wasserman, George Ryder, Norman Garmes, Margaret Kline, David Smythe-Richards, Henri Russell. *ed*: Clancy Syrko. *narrator*: Jess Pearson. *w*: Charles Manson, Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, Charles "Tex" Watson, Robert Beausoleil, Linda Kasabian. *Original running time*: 93 mins (UK: 83 mins).

**MEAT**

USA, 1976. *d*: Frederick Wiseman. *p*: Frederick Wiseman. *ph*: William Brayne. *ed*: Frederick Wiseman, Oliver Kool. 112 mins.

**MONDO BALORDO**

Italy, 1964. *d*: Roberto Bianchi Montero. *presented by*: Albert T. Viola. *ph*: Giuseppe La Torre. *ed*: Enzo Alfonsi. *narration*: Francesco Torti, Guido Castaldo. *m*: Lallo Gori, Nino Rosso. *English version ed*: Fred Von Bernewitz. *English version narration by*: Ted Weiss. *English version narrator*: Boris Karloff. *Original running time*: 93 mins (*English version*: 87 mins).

**MONDO BIZARRO**

Aka: *Bizarro*

USA, 1966. *d*: R.L. Frost. *Original idea*: R.W. Cresse, R.L. Frost. *p*: Felix Lomax [Bob Cresse]. *m*: Lawrence Van Lattman. *narration*: David Kayne [Bob Cresse & R.L. Frost]. *narrator*: Claude Emmand. 78 mins.

**MONDO CANE**

Aka: *A Dog's Life*. Aka: *Mondo Cane No.1*

Aka: *Mondo Insanity (?)*

Italy, 1962. *d/p*: Gualtiero Jacopetti. *assoc d/p*: Paolo Cavara, Franco Prosperi. *d ph*: Antonio Climati, Benito Frattari. *ed/wr/narration*: Gualtiero Jacopetti. *m*: Nino Oliviero, Riz Ortolani. *organiser of location ph*: Stanis Nieveo. *Original running time*: 105 mins (*running time as Mondo Cane No.1*: 97 mins).

**MONDO CANE 2**

Aka: *Mondo Pazzo*. Aka: *Mondo Cane No.2*

Italy, 1963. *d*: Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi. *p*: Mario Maffei, Giorgio Cecchini. *ph*: Benito Frattari. *ed*: Mario Morra. *m*: Nino Oliviero. *comm*: Gualtiero Jacopetti.

**MONDO CANE OGGI: L'ORRORE CONTINUA**

Aka: *Mondo Cane 3*

Italy, (late-80s). *d/d ph*: Max Steel. *asst d*: Paolo Santoni. *p*: Silvano Marabotti. *sc*: Gino Capone. *ed*: Cesare Bianchini. *m*: Walter Martino,

Claudio Cimpanelli.

**MONDO CANE 2000: L'INCREDIBILE**

Aka: *Mondo Cane 4*

Italy, 1988. *d*: Gabrielle Crisanti. *ed*: Cesare Bianchini. *asst ed*: Sonia Blasi Toccaceli. *sc*: Luigi Mangini. *m*: Claudio Cimpanelli. *narrator*: Renzo Stacchi.

**MONDO DAYTONA: HOW TO SWING ON YOUR SPRING VACATION**

USA, 1968. *d*: Frank Willard. *p*: Bill Packham, Gordon Craddock. *m* *d*: Bill Lowry. *narrator*: Billy Joe Royal. 80 mins.

**MONDO EROTICO**

Original title: *Le Notti Porno Nel Mondo*

Italy, 1977. *d*: Jimmy Matheus [Bruno Mattei]. *p*: Marlo Paladini. *sc*: Bruno Mattei. *ph*: Enrico Biribicchi. *ed*: Vincent Jones. *m*: Joe Dynamo. *w*: Laura Gemser. *Original running time*: 90 minutes (UK *running time*: 70 mins).

**MONDO FREUDO (THE WORLD OF FREUD)**

Aka: *Mondo Sexuality*.

USA, 1966. *d*: R.L. Frost. *p*: R.W. Cresse. *sc*: Michael Eder. *m*: The Duvals. *camera unit no.1*: *d*: Kasem Salhmahdine. *ph*: Eldor Ishmahd. *camera unit no.2*: *d*: Seasu Hakasomi. *ph*: Jerome Matsumurie. [All oriental names possibly pseudonyms for Bob Cresse & R.L. Frost.] 80 mins.

**MONDO MAGIC**

Original title: *Magia Nuda*. Aka: *Shocking Cannibals* (?)

Italy, 1974. *d*: Alfredo & Angelo Castiglioni, Guido Guerrasio. *wr*: Alberto Moravia. *ph*: Angelo Castiglioni, Alfredo Castiglioni. *narrator*: Marc Mauro Smith. *m*: Angelo Francesco Lavagnino.

**MONDO NEW YORK**

USA, 1988. *d*: Harvey Keith. *exec p*: Dorian Hendrix. *p*: Stuart S. Shapiro. *wr*: David Silver, Harvey Keith. *based on an original concept by*: Stuart S. Shapiro. *d ph*: Leonard Wong. *ed*: Richard Friedman. *m*: Johnny Pacheco, Luis Perico Ortiz. *w*: Joey Arias, Rick Aviles, Charlie Barnett, Joe Coleman, Emilio Cubiero.

**MONDO SEX**

Original title: *Mille Peccati . . . Nessuna Virtù*

Aka: *Wages of Sin*

Italy, 1969. *d*: Sergio Martino. *p/supervising d/sc*: Luciano Martino. *ph*: Floriano Trenker. *ed*: Eugenio Martino. *m*: Peppino De Luca. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. 90 mins.

**NAKED AND VIOLENT**

Original title: *America: Così Nuda Così Violenta*

French title: *Amerique A Nu*

Italy, 1970. *d*: Sergio Martino. *p/sc*: Luciano Martino. *ph*: Floriano Trenker. *ed*: Michele Massimo Tarantini. *m*: Bruno Nicolai. *comm*: Guido Gerosa, Gianfranco Venè. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. *Original running time*: 104 mins (*UK running time*: 86 mins).

### **NAKED ENGLAND**

Original title: *Inghilterra Nuda*

Italy, 1969. *d*: Vittorio De Sisti. *p*: Pino De Martino. *sc*: Ettore Mattia, Pino De Martino, Vittorio De Sisti. *ph*: Marcello Masciocchi. *ed*: Antonietta Zita, Sandra Lena. *m*: Piero Piccioni. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. *Original running time*: 108 minutes (*UK running time*: 87 mins).

### **NAKED WORLD**

Original title: *Mondo Nudo*

Italy, 1963 (released in 1968). *d*: Francesco De Feo. *p*: Giuseppe Marotta. *sc*: Giuseppe Marotta, Giancarlo Fusco. *ph*: Adalberto Albertini. *m*: Teo Uselli. *d of additional scenes*: Albert T. Viola. 92 mins (*original running time as Mondo Nudo*: 105 mins).

### **NEAR DEATH**

USA, 1989. *p/d/ed*: Frederick Wiseman. *ph*: John Davey. *camera asst*: Ollie Hollowell, Lyn Gaza. *production asst*: Richard Gliklich, Nancy Simonian. *special thanks to*: Richard C. Pasternak. *In association with Channel 4 and La Sept*.

### **NETWORK**

USA, 1976. *d*: Sidney Lumet. *p*: Howard Gottfried. *asst d*: Jay Allan Hopkins, Ralph Singleton. *sc*: Paddy Chayefsky. *ph*: Owen Roizman. *ed*: Alan Heim. *m*: Elliot Lawrence. *narrator*: Lee Richardson. *w*: Faye Dunaway (Diana Christenson), William Holden (Max Schumacher), Peter Finch (Howard Beale), Robert Duvall (Frank Hackett). 121 mins.

### **NOI E L'AMORE: COMPORTAMENTO SESSUALE DEVIANTE**

Aka: *Mutant Sexual Behaviour*

Italy, (mid/late-80s). *d/sc*: Antonio D'Agostino. *d ph*: Maurizio Centini. *m*: Piero Montanari. *w*: Sergio Antonica, Pietro Barreca, Gabriele Carrara, Claudio Crisafi, Maria Cristina Del Monte.

### **NUDE AND CRUDE**

Original title: *Nudo e Crudele*

Italy, 1984. *d*: Albert Thomas. *d ph*: Guglielmo Mancori. *sc*: Vincenzo Mannino. *ed*: Vicenzo Tomassi. *m*: Nico Fidenco. *narrator*: Romano Malaspina.

### **OF THE DEAD**

Aka: *The End*

Belgium, 1972. *d*: Jean-Pol Ferbus, Dominique Garny, Thierry Zeno. *p*: Thierry Zeno. *asst d*: Guillermo Diaz Palafox, Terry Stegner,

Kim Youn Hwan. *ph*: Thierry Zeno, Terry Stegner. *ed*: Thierry Zeno, Roland Grillon. *m*: Alain Pierre.

#### **OH! AMERICA**

France, 197-. *d*: Michel Parbot. *ph*: James Szalapsky. 66 mins.

#### **OPTIONS TO LIVE**

USA, 1979. *presented by*: Highway Safety Films, Inc. *p*: Earle J. Deems (?). *ed*: Doris Shaw. *narrator*: Karl Mackey.

#### **PAST MIDNIGHT**

USA, 1991. *d*: Jan Eliasberg. *exec p*: Paul Hertzberg. *assoc p*: Quentin Tarantino. *wr*: Frank Norwood. *ph*: Robert Yeoman. *ed*: Christopher Rouse. *m*: Steve Bartek. *w*: Rutger Hauer (Ben Jordan), Natasha Richardson (Laura Mathews), Clancy Brown, Guy Boyd. 96 mins.

#### **PEEPING TOM**

Great Britain, 1960. *p/d*: Michael Powell. *asst d*: Ted Sturgis. *production manager*: Al Marcus. *based on an original story by*: Leo Marks. *ph*: Otto Heller. *ed*: Noreen Ackland. *m*: Brian Easdale. *w*: Carl Boehm (Mark Lewis), Moira Shearer (Vivian), Ann Massey (Helen Stephens), Maxine Audley (Mrs. Stephens), Pamela Green. 103 mins.

#### **THE QUEER . . . THE EROTIC**

Original title: *L'Altra Faccia del Peccato*

Italy, 1969. *d*: Marcello Avallone. *exec. p*: Sergio Martino. *p*: Luciano Martino. *sc*: Giacinto Ciaccio, Massimo D'Avack. *story*: Luciano Martino. *ph*: Antonio Borghesi. *ed*: Paolo Lucignani. *m*: Peppino De Luca. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. *Original running time*: 95 mins (UK: 91 mins).

#### **SAVAGE AFRICA**

Original title: *Congolaise*

France, 1950. *d*: Jacques Dupont. *p*: Jack Reiger. *assoc p*: Mickey Schwarz. *story by*: Peter Ordway *as told to*: Robert St. John and Ray Morgan. *supervisor*: Gilbert Rouget. *ph*: Edmund Sechan. *recorded in Africa by*: Andre Didier, Pierre Gausseau. *m*: Bernardo Segall. 70 mins.

#### **SAVAGE MAN . . . SAVAGE BEAST**

Original title: *Ultime Grida Dalla Savana: La Grande Caccia*

Aka: *Savage Temptation*. Aka: *The Great Hunting*.

Italy, 1975. *d/p/sc/ph/ed*: Antonio Climati, Mario Morra. *m*: Carlo Savina. *collaborators*: Claudio Ruspoli, Giancarlo Lari, Evelyne Bridel, Brandino Rangoni, Gianpaolo Lomi, Lorenzo Ricciardi. *comm*: Alberto Moravia. *Original running time*: 100 mins (UK: 84 mins).

#### **SAVAGE ZONE**

Aka: *Dimensione Violenza*

Italy, (mid-80s). *d/sc*: Mario Morra. *exec p*: Alessandro Ojetti. *based*

*on an original idea by:* Willy Molco, Mario Morra, Emilio Ugoletti.  
*ph:* Giancarlo Pancaldi, Adolfo Bartoli, Domenico Ciamparella.  
*underwater ph:* Gianlorenzo Battaglia. *m:* Daniele Patucchi. *narration*  
*wr:* Willy Molco, Emilio Ugoletti, Nick Alexander. *narrators:* Ken  
 Belton, Tony La Penna.

### SECRET AFRICA

Original title: *Africa Segreta*  
 Italy, 1969. *d/pled/comm:* Guido Guerrasio. *co-d/sc:* Alfredo  
 Castiglioni, Angelo Castiglioni, Oreste Pellini. *m:* Angelo Francesco  
 Lavagnino. 95 mins.

### SECRET FRENCH PROSTITUTION REPORT

Original title: *Dossier Prostitution*. Aka: *Girls For Pleasure*.  
 France, 1969. *d:* Jean-Claude Roy. *p:* René Thévenet. *sc:* Jean-Claude  
 Roy. *based on the book by:* Dominique Dallayrac. *ph:* Claude Saunier.  
*ed:* Walter Spohr. *m:* Jacques Loussier. *narrator:* Lee Payant. *w:* Jean-  
 Philippe Ancelle (The Sweeper), Line Arnel (The Maid), Adaly Bayle  
 (Maria), Valérie Boisgel (Mariette). 90 mins. *Subtitles and English*  
*commentary.*

### SHOCK ENDING

GB, 1987. *d/ed:* Brian Davies. *w:* Paul Roberts (Colin), Gwenno  
 Hodgkins (Barbara), Chris Williams (John), Debbie Perry (Julie),  
 Gerwyn Capon (Andy).

### SHOCKING AFRICA

Aka: *The Last Savage Part II*. Aka: *Faces of Pain*.  
 Italy, 1982. *d:* Angelo and Alfredo Castiglioni. *wr:* Guglielmo  
 Guariglia. *ed:* Luisa Baruffini. *narrator:* Ken Belton.

### SHOCKING ASIA

Aka: *Asia Perversa*.  
 West Germany, 1974. *d/wr:* Emerson Fox [Rolf Olsen?]. *asst d:* Ilse  
 Olsen. *exec p:* Wolfgang Von Sciber. *p:* Geiseltasteig-Film Germany,  
 W.V. Schiber & First Film Organisation Hong Kong. *sc:* Ingeborg  
 Steinbach. *d ph:* Franz X. Lederle. *ed:* Puppa Walter. *m:* Erwin Halletz.

### SHOCKING ASIA 2

Original title: *Die Letzten Tabu's Shocking Asia 2*.  
 West Germany, 1985. *d/wr:* Emerson Fox [Rolf Olsen?]. *asst d:* Ilse  
 Olsen-Petermell. *ph:* Franx X. Lederle, Reiner Teumer, Christopher  
 Fryman. *m:* Michael Landau.

### THE SHOCKS

Japan, (late-80s?). *d:* Kentaro Uchida. *exec p:* Tsuneo Hayakawa,  
 Kazuhiko Ishikawa. *planning p:* Katsuya Umezawa. *p:* Kenzo Kuroda,  
 Norihisa Shibata. *m:* Masao Yagi.

### SPECIAL EFFECTS

USA, 1984. *d/wr*: Larry Cohen. *asst d*: Jenny Fitzgibbons. *exec p*: Carter De Haven. *assoc p*: Barry Shils. *p*: Paul Kurta. *m*: Michael Minard. *w*: Zoe Tamarlis (Andrea/Elaine), Eric Bogosian (Neville), Brad Rijn (Keefe), Kevin O'Connor (Det. Lt. Delroy). *Original running time*: 101 minutes (30 seconds cut in UK).

### **SPOTS IN THE SUN**

German title: *Verbotene Welt*

Japan, 1964. *d*: Nobuo Nakagawa, Kioshi Komori, Tsukasa Takahashi, Kichinosuke Yoshida. 94 mins.

### **STORY OF A JUNKIE**

Original title: *Gringo*

USA, 1985. *d*: Lech Kowalski. *p*: Lech Kowalski, Ann S. Barish. *d ph*: Raffi Ferrucci. *ed*: Val Kuklowsky. *m*: Chuck Kentis. *w*: John Spacely.

### **STRANGE WORLD**

Germany (?), 1950s (?). *d*: Franz Eichhorn. *exec p*: Al O'Camp. *p*: O.A. Bayer. *d ph*: Edgar Eichhorn. *story/sc*: Al O'Camp, F.E. Eichhorn, O.A. Bayer. *ed*: Rudolph Brent, Jose Canizares. *m*: W. Schultz, Porto Alegro, Emil Velazco. *w*: Angelica Hauff (Elisa), Alexander Carlos (Edgar), America Cabral (Father), W. Hardt (Publisher), Kumatzakuma (Indian Chief).

### **SWEDEN – HEAVEN AND HELL**

Original title: *Svezia, Inferno e Paradiso*

Italy, 1968. *d*: Luigi Scattini. *sc/ed/comm*: Luigi Scattini. *ph*: Claudio Racca. *m*: Piero Umiliano. *narrator*: Edmund Purdom. *Original running time*: 90 mins (UK running time: 78 mins).

### **SWEET AND SAVAGE**

Original title: *Dolce e Selvaggio*.

Aka: *Mundo Dulce y Cruel*. Aka: *Caramba!*

Italy, 1983. *d/sc*: Antonio Climati, Mario Morra. *asst d*: Sandro Corazza. *p*: Alessandro Fracassi. *production supervisor*: Maurizio Anticoli. *ph*: Evelin Bridel. *comm*: Franco E. Prosperi. *m adviser*: Daniele Patucchi. *English language version supervised by*: Lewis E. Cianelli. *English dialogue*: Robert Katz. *narrator*: Robert Sommer.

### **TEENAGE BABYLON. . .**

Australia, 1989. *d*: Graeme Wood. *p/wr/ed*: Graeme Wood. *ph*: Robin Plunkett. *costume & scenery*: Robby Douglas Turner, *asst by*: Zoe Harvey. *make-up*: Vivienne Magillicuddy. *stills ph*: Jennifer Mitchell. *special thanks to*: Det. Sgt. David Richardson of the Forensic Science Photographic Section. *w*: Jack Mitchell, Caryn Clark, John McKay, Anton Marin, Roy Milne, Tanya Moore.

### **TEENAGERS**

Original title: *Les Teenagers*

France, 1967. *d/sc*: Pierre Roustang. *ph*: Jacques Elissalde, Edmond Caprasse, Tony Fosberg, Jacques Lang, Pierre Levent, Patrick Meunier, Jean-Jacques Renon, Jean-Marie Ripert, Raymond Steiner. *ed*: Jacqueline Lecomte, Nicole Lubtchansky. *m*: François De Roubaix. 92 mins.

### **THIS IS AMERICA**

UK title: *Crazy Ridiculous American People*

Alternative US title: *Jabberwalk*

USA, 1976. *d/p/sc*: Romano Vanderbes. *asst d*: Patricia Baum. *ph*: Steven Harris, Robert Campbell. *ed*: Victor Zimet. *m*: Emanuel Vardi. *narrator*: Norman Rose. *Original running time*: 98 minutes. (UK: 87 mins).

### **THIS IS YOUR ENEMY**

Germany-USA, [early-1940s]. *English comm wr*: Roger Q. Denny.

*English narrator*: Knox Manning. *ed*: Doug Gould.

### **THIS VIOLENT WORLD**

Aka: *Savage World*. Aka: *Mondo Diavolo*. Aka: *Savanna Violenta*.

Aka: *Savage Man*, *Savage Beast Part 2*

Italy, 1978. *d*: Antonio Climati, Mario Morra. *p*: Titanus Distribuzione. *original idea/sc*: Mario Morra, Antonio Climati. *ed*: Mario Morra. *m*: Guido & Maurizio De Angelis. *filmed with the collaboration of*: Federico Abussi, Fabrizio Barra.

### **THRILL KILL VIDEO CLUB**

USA, 1991. *d/story*: Richard Prichard. *exec p*: Matt Mitler. *p*: Jennifer Babbist, Robert Prichard. *d ph*: Robin Grant. *ed*: Mike Bianchi. *w*: Todd Alcott, Debra Kaplan, Chuck Montgomery, Frank Senger, Kimberly Flynn (Lizzie), The Poster Boys. 50 mins.

### **TITICUT FOLLIES**

USA, 1967. *d*: Frederick Wiseman. *p/led*: Frederick Wiseman. *ph*: John Marshall. *assoc ed*: Alyne Model. *assoc p*: David Eames.

### **TRUE GORE**

USA, 1987. *d*: M. Dixon Causey. *creative consultant*: Monte Cazazza. *tech supervisor*: Sheri West. *m*: The Atom Smashers.

### **UNKNOWN POWERS**

USA, 1975. *p/d*: Don Como. *d ph*: Clark Dugger. *wr*: Don Como, Richard Croy, Brad Steiger. *w*: Samantha Eggar, Jack Palance, Will Geer, Roscoe Lee Browne.

### **VIDEODROME**

USA, 1982. *d/wr*: David Cronenberg. *exec p*: Victor Solnicki, Pierre David. *p*: Claude Heroux. *assoc p*: Lawrence Nesis. *m*: Howard Shore. *special makeup*: Rick Baker. *w*: James Woods, Sonja Smits, Deborah

Harry (Nicki), Peter Dvorsky. 82 mins.

**VIDEO VIOLENCE . . . WHEN RENTING IS NOT ENOUGH!!**

USA, 1986/7. *d*: Gary Cohen. *exec p*: Salvatore Richichi, James Golff. *p*: Ray Clark. *wr*: Gary Cohen, Paul Kaye. *m*: Gordon Ovsiew. *w*: Art Niell, William Toddie, Uke, Bart Summer, Lisa Cohen. 90 mins.

**WE HAVE COME FOR YOUR DAUGHTERS**

Original US title: *Medicine Ball Caravan*

USA/France, 1971. *dlsc*: François Reichenbach. *p*: François Reichenbach, Tom Donahue. *assoc. p*: Martin Scorsese. *asst d*: Gerard Chevalier. *Based on an idea by*: Christian Haren. *ph*: Christian Odasso, Gerard De Batista, Jean Michel Surel, Michel Houssiau. *ed*: Fred Talmadge (USA), Gerard Patris (France). *w*: B.B. King, Alice Cooper, Stoneground, Sal Valentino. 88 mins.

**WILD WILD WORLD**

Italy, 1965. *d/p*: Alessandro Jacovoni. *m*: Roberto Nicolosi. *English version adapted and dir by*: Bob Sokoler. *narrator*: Eddie Bracken. 80 mins.

**WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES**

Aka: *Häxan*. Danish title: *Heksen*

Sweden, 1921. *d*: Benjamin Christensen. *sc*: Benjamin Christensen. *ph*: Johan Ankerstjerne. *w*: Maren Pedersen (The Witch), Clara Pontoppidan (The Nun), Tora Teje (The Modern Hysteric), Elith Pio (The Young Monk), Benjamin Christensen (The Devil). (1969 *re-release m*: Daniel Humair. *narrator*: William Burroughs) 76 mins.

**WOODSTOCK**

USA, 1970. *d*: Michael Wadleigh. *p*: Bob Maurice. *asst d*: Martin Scorsese, Thelma Schoonmaker. *ph*: Michael Wadleigh, David Meyers, Richard Pearce, Don Lenzer, Al Wertheimer. *ed*: Robert Alvarez, Yubun-Yee, B.K. Hirsh, Jere Huggins, Muffie Meyer, Stan Warnow. 184 mins.

**WORST OF FACES OF DEATH**

USA, 1989. *d*: Conan Le Cilaire. *p*: Rosilyn T. Scott. *assoc p*: F.U. Yordan. *wr*: Alan Black, James B. Schwartz. *tech consultant & hosted by*: Dr. Louis Flellis. *narrator*: Dr. Frances B. Gröss. *m*: Gene Kauer.

**YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT**

USA, 1968. *d/ph*: Barry Feinstein. *p*: Peter Yarrow, Barry Feinstein. *ed*: Howard Alk. *w*: Tiny Tim, Paul Butterfield, Father Malcolm Boyd, Harper's Bizarre, Peter Yarrow, Barry McGuire, The Electric Flag, The Family Dog. 75 mins.





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